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# THE LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

by W. E. DOUBLEDAY, HON. F.L.A.

THIS new Series of Handbooks is intended to supplement the larger Manuals issued by Messrs. Allen & Unwin and the Library Association under the title of *The Library Association Series of Library Manuals*.

There are some aspects of Library work which, although by no means unimportant, are of themselves insufficient to require a full-sized manual, and there are other phases which in a comprehensive textbook of manageable dimensions could be dealt with only in a general way. The Handbooks will adequately cover these subjects and will also treat of certain special topics which hitherto have escaped the attention which they deserve, or which—owing to recent developments—demand reconsideration.

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This smaller Series is issued independently by Messrs. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., and the range is sufficiently wide to make the volumes appeal to Administrators, Librarians, Assistants, and Students who intend to sit at the professional examinations. It is hoped that they will be of great practical assistance for immediate use in enhancing and forwarding still further that improvement in Library service which has been so marked since the passing of the Public Libraries Act of 1919.

## P R E F A C E

IN my *Manual of Library Organization* I wrote that there were various other matters which required more detailed consideration than could be given in that work, owing to the limitation of space which necessarily had to be imposed. This present work is intended therefore to be complementary to the manual, and I hope will appeal to a wider circle of readers than that work was intended particularly for, although the gratifying success attending it and the very kindly reception of it in the press prove that its interest was certainly not confined to the student class.

I want to emphasize particularly the fact that the views and opinions herein expressed are not necessarily those of any other person or body. Nevertheless, I hope they will receive sympathetic consideration by all interested in the library movement. They are the outcome of many years' experience, observation, and study and are put forward with no other purpose than to stimulate thought and action in everyone anxious for the progressive development of one of the greatest assets in our national life. There will, I know, be many who will find it difficult to agree with many things I have said, but I hope there will be no one who will turn against any suggestion I have made before giving careful and reasoned consideration to the pros and cons of the matter. It does not help any



movement if some idea, which may never have come into a reader's mind before, is turned down without a moment's thought simply because it *is* new. The more debatable the contents of this volume, so much the more likely are they to set minds at work pondering them. That is what I most earnestly desire. Nobody can fail to be impressed with the great strides which have been made in recent years by our library system, but, and largely because of that, no one who is a well-wisher of the institutions within that system and those who are responsible for them, and who has really studied facts as they are, can fail to be equally impressed by the damaging influence on public opinion caused by the existence of dreary buildings, badly organized services, underpaid staffs, disinterested authorities, and a consequently apathetic public. A small percentage of the whole, but the part which usually gets most of the limelight in the popular press. Some authorities, and certainly most libraries, do the best possible, with almost negative results; a few it is feared are too indifferent to show much concern. I hope and believe this volume will be a stimulant in one case and an encouragement in the other. It is the conscientious gospel of one who, after fifty years' continuous service in and for the library profession, is proud to have the opportunity once more of trying to inspire crowds of others who desire to hasten evolution (yes, and even revolution) in the library kingdom.

There are still other problems, such as national and international co-operation, county libraries, regional schemes and school libraries, matters of the greatest importance, which I have deliberately refrained from discussing, partly because I had already exceeded my allotted space, partly because they are dealt with by abler pens than mine, and, not least, because they represent rather a different aspect of the question.

The illustrations and plans have not, I believe, been published before in this country, and I hope they will be found of real value in elucidating the text. I wish to express my cordial thanks to the Snead Company and Messrs. Luxfer Limited for providing the material for the illustrations and for giving me permission to publish them, and particularly to their European representative, Mr. L. E. Helbig, for the trouble he has taken in my behalf.

To Mr. W. E. Doubleday, the General Editor of this series, I am deeply indebted for reading my manuscript, and for many suggestions which, although they have toned down some of my exuberance, have only increased the value of the work thereby.

B. M. HEADICAR

*February 1936*



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# THE LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE

## CHAPTER I

### LEGISLATION AND CONTROL

It will be remembered that the Public Libraries Committee in their Report issued in 1927 strongly recommended that the opportunity should be taken to consolidate the 1892 Act (Public Libraries, England and Wales), so as to provide for the needs of the library movement to-day, indicated the more important provisions which a consolidating measure should include, and suggested various amendments for inclusion or rejection. Such a revised and consolidated statute it was recommended should treat the code of library law as of universal application throughout England and Wales.

It was proposed that the first section of the new Act should establish a library authority in every area in England and Wales consisting of the borough council in London and the common council in the City of London, the county borough council in the county borough, the existing library authority in existing library areas, and elsewhere the county council.

Provision for changes in the area of library authorities, if made, was to be treated in succeeding sub-



sections. First, an existing library authority should be empowered, with the approval of the Board of Education, to surrender its powers to the county, with the result that it would become merged in the county. Secondly, the Board of Education should on the application of the county be empowered by Order to constitute a new library authority in any area consisting of one or more parishes, urban districts or boroughs, and on that constitution the powers of the county would cease. The hope was expressed that the first of these powers would be freely, and the second sparingly exercised. In view of the fact that existing provisions for co-operation fail to cover the circumstances created by the Act of 1919, the Committee proposed that a comprehensive section authorizing every possible form of co-operation for library purposes, and removing all obstacles to co-operation, should be substituted for the provisions now valid. Any library authority should have power to delegate any matter (except the power of raising a rate or borrowing money). Membership of Library Committees should be governed by the requirement that the Committee shall consist "wholly or partly of members of the authority," a requirement which would be satisfied by including only one member of the authority. By the 1892 Act persons appointed to the Committee need not be members of the urban authority. The Local Government Act of 1933, however, decrees that a committee of a local authority must

contain at least two-thirds who are members of the local authority. It was recommended also that any Library Committee should be given power to delegate all or any of its powers to a sub-committee or sub-committees consisting in whole or in part of members of the Education Committee, it being contended that this would afford a convenient method of operating the Act in a large county. The Committee recommended that amendments to the existing Acts should enable a Library Authority to use the library premises for any purposes calculated to promote the use of the library, to provide lectures and pay the expenses thereof as well as charge a fee for admission, and allow the library premises to be used either at a rent or free of charge for any purposes which the authority thinks proper and which do not interfere with the normal purposes of the library. It is to be noted that (except for one or two places under local Acts) the only part of the British Isles which has power to pay for lectures out of the library rate is the Irish Free State, a power given by that State's Local Government Act of 1925.

The Committee took the view that the public library is the natural and often the only local centre for all kinds of educational effort, that lectures are a valuable means of extending education, and that a library authority should have a free hand to provide for them in close connection with the books in its library. Other suggested amendments included the

repeal of Section 4 (I) of the 1919 Public Libraries Act, which enables authorities on adopting the Acts to limit in advance their expenditure. Once the library rate is determined it cannot be altered for another twelve months. It was considered by those responsible for the 1919 Act that local authorities who had not adopted the Libraries Acts would be encouraged to do so by having their expenditure under them limited in advance, a hope which has not been realized to any extent.

No new library legislation has been promulgated since the Act of 1919, but it is generally recognized that the recommendations of the Committee were sound and represented the general desire of librarians. As to when such legislation as proposed is likely to appear in the parliamentary programme nobody seems to have any idea, and it seems likely to be hidden in the Report for a long time yet. Meanwhile the growth of regional schemes and the development of voluntary co-operation between libraries of all classes have engrossed the attention of all concerned with the library movement, while the prominence recently given to the question of State control in the columns of the *Library Association Record* shows that a movement, unofficial of course, is afoot which may lead to a considerable change in the relationship of libraries with government departments. This question is of such importance that I feel justified in dealing with it at length, and I will try to put the problem as fairly

as I can while submitting my own views as to what may be both advantageous and desirable.

It is, I believe, a fact that many librarians, for self-preservation, dare not *publicly* express their real feelings on such a question as State control of libraries. There are many who, in private conversation, confess that they are confident that some kind of official inspection or direct supervision of public libraries by a government department is bound to come, sooner or later. Some witnesses before the Public Libraries Committee "advocated, or at least contemplated the possibility of, substantial financial assistance to the public libraries from the Government, carrying with it, as a natural corollary, a considerable measure of government control." The Committee pointed out certain obvious advantages which would accrue from such a policy. A substantial grant would meet two problems—inadequate salaries and inadequate book supplies. Inspection, which must accompany a grant, "would be a powerful instrument for dealing with one of the main defects of the library service, namely, the existence of backward areas," where "libraries do not flourish, and the public is deprived of the intellectual resources which they should provide." In regard to the prejudice which exists in many quarters against the idea of government control, the Committee reported "We do not share this suspicion of inspection." Where it exists, as in education, its character has greatly changed in the course of time, and now aims

at encouragement and assistance rather than repression. The Committee saw no reason why inspection of libraries should mean anything different from that in education, and considered it would be an assistance to progressive librarians and authorities as well as a stimulus to the backward: any objections on these grounds could be met, but, said the Committee, "*in the existing state of the national finances*" (the italics are my own) "it would be idle to expect a grant on a scale which would be effective." Secondly, "we do not believe it to be necessary." Local resources should be able to meet the need for increased expenditure on staff and books and when they are insufficient the need can be met in other ways. The Committee therefore did not advocate government inspection but instead "some central organization for furnishing advice and stimulus." This was to consist of a bureau attached to the National Central Library, "which would be able to assist progressive libraries which sought its aid, and which through its reports would stimulate the backward areas." This bureau would be able to supply those government departments which administer public libraries acts with the expert guidance ("for instance, as to library planning or library byelaws") of which they may stand in need. In effect the Committee were prepared to rely upon persuasion and the force of public opinion rather than by coercion. But where is the public opinion in backward areas and by whom is the persuasion in such

cases to be done? Inspection and report by *competent* persons would inform the public of what was necessary to be done, and by so doing would create a public opinion, which might ultimately be strong enough to produce the required amount of persuasion to be effective. Four years after the Report of the Public Libraries Committee appeared, Mr. E. Salter Davies (a member of the Public Libraries Committee and a signatory to the report) in his article on "The Future of County Libraries" (*Library Association Record*, December 1931) argued that larger units of local government must replace the smaller units, or many of the functions of the latter will be absorbed by the central government. "The enlargement of the areas of local government does not involve the extinction of the interest of the smaller towns and villages. Such a result would be as unnecessary as it would be deplorable." In most of the spheres of local government there exists a national body charged with the general oversight of the particular service in question. "In the sphere of libraries," wrote Mr. Salter Davies, "it is non-existent. The absence of any central authority charged with the oversight of library developments is, as I believe, responsible for a large amount of wasteful overlapping, lack of co-ordination and, in extreme cases, gross inefficiency." "Unfortunately, however, many localities are impervious to persuasion, and the scandal of inefficient libraries will remain until there is a department of government responsible for the efficiency of

the library system of the country." "There was a time when inspectors of schools were regarded as the natural enemy of schoolmasters. This attitude is now a thing of the past." "Teachers generally know that the inspector is their best friend." Mr. Davies goes on to discuss what kind of central authority should be charged with the oversight of libraries, if there is to be one, and concludes "Sooner or later there must be established a library department of the central government which will be responsible alike for urban and for county libraries, and charged with the duty of inspection and of assistance by means of grants from the national exchequer."

In the *Library Association Record* for July 1935, the question of government control is fully discussed in an editorial and in an ably reasoned article by Mr. Savage. The article compares the case for State control and grants with the present system. The Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees ask for a "careful investigation of the desirability of the establishment of a Government Library Department," and, as Mr. Savage points out, the Board of Education in their annual report issued in 1934 noted their lack of power to inspect or regulate the conduct of Public Libraries. So far as I am aware there has been nothing made public by the Library Association as to their official policy in regard to this problem, but it was touched upon from varying angles by several speakers at the Manchester Conference in September 1935.

There is no space in this volume to discuss all the pros and cons of the problem in detail, and I will content myself by putting my own views, the result of considerable thought for a long time, and as one who will not be affected in any way by any changes of policy which may ensue. Briefly, I believe that some kind of inspectorial body is essential for the library movement, not only because I think that it would give added status to the Public Library system in that it would become a more distinctly national business, but also because, in my opinion, the condition of the distressed areas, or "special areas" as the Government likes to term them, and the libraries within them must compel them to look elsewhere than locally for their efficient upkeep. The great migration of populations necessitated by unemployment and new locations for industry, coupled with the effect of the De-rating Act of 1929 upon libraries in industrial areas and the unequal operation of the library rate in varying localities, call for a wider outlook and more communal support for the libraries than can be brought about by existing methods of administration. Mr. Nowell was perfectly right to my way of thinking when he stated in his paper at Manchester,<sup>1</sup> that great cities like Manchester should not be asked to provide regional "British Museums" entirely from the pockets of the local ratepayers. It is useless to argue, as is

<sup>1</sup> "Minimum Standards for Library Service" (*Library Association Record*, September 1935, pp. 363-371).



being done, that our public libraries are generally such a state of perfection that no inspection or control by government departments is necessary. Almost da one reads correspondence, extracts from annual report and other documents, which call attention to long standing defects in many libraries, not necessarily those in small towns or of recent establishment.

A letter dated August 29, 1935, from a resident one of the richest towns in the west of England complains that the public library is dark and ill ventilated, the books are musty and dirty, the stock of books is out of date, and the hours of opening inconvenient. The library, it is pointed out, does not open before 10 a.m. and is closed all day on Fridays. Presumably this latter refers to the lending library. Another letter, dated September 7th, calls attention to the general untidiness and squalor that characterize the interior of many public libraries and reading-rooms, the great majority being far from clean, orderly, or cheerful. This letter was from the Chairman of a Public Library Committee. In another letter with the same date, referring to the reading-room of the public library in a large town, the writer asserts that he has seen tramps retire to a corner, select a bulky pile of back numbers as a parapet and, using the current issue as a table-cloth, proceed to devour greasy sandwiches in warmth and comfort. It is added that "the number of filthy and greasy stains on popular magazines after a day or two is disgusting, and the practice

of licking unclean thumbs is largely the cause." Objection is also taken to the practice of passing on these same befingered journals to another branch when they are a month old.

Again, take the case of a large south coast town, certainly not a distressed area. We find from the local paper of August 3, 1935, that the lending library is terribly congested, 22,000 books are crowded into a space sufficient only for half that number under proper conditions, the floor space contains twice as many bookcases as are convenient, and the gangways are so narrow and the shelves so high "that a visitor from an alien planet might imagine that the earth was peopled with giraffes rather than human beings." Neither poverty nor lack of time can be pleaded as an excuse for this state of things, but how can this and similar cases be remedied without some outside pressure upon public opinion in such a district? A rate of three-halfpence in the pound and an expenditure of little more than £3,000 a year is absurd for a seaside town with a population bordering on 70,000. It would be the business of inspection to inquire into the reasons of this backward state of things on request by, say, the Library Association. In fact it would be a good thing to get an analysis of the general efficiency of libraries, in all places where the expenditure per head of population is less than about 2s. per annum. Obviously such an analysis should be made by independent parties unconnected with the library move-

ment. It would be manifestly unfair for members of the Library Association to be called upon to criticize their own colleagues in the profession, and it would be a distasteful task in any event.

With regard to the really depressed areas it is common knowledge that some towns with substantial and well-organized libraries have been depleted of 20 per cent of their population during the last few years, and in certain places the rates range from 20s. to 27s. 6d. in the pound. It was officially stated in October 1935, that in one street of Oldham alone there were seventy-eight empty shops. Empty shops do not pay rates, and the library rate has to be supplied by somebody unless efficiency is to suffer.

Clearly it is impossible for libraries to be kept in a state of efficiency from local finances alone, and outside help is surely not an unreasonable thing to ask for in circumstances which the local authority are quite unable to control. Depopulation of these areas has been one of the main planks of the Government for reducing unemployment, which is largely a national and not a local problem. The remedy seems to lie in the giving of power to some nationally appointed body to make grants to such localities, and in fact to all places where it is determined that every possible reasonable effort has been made by the locality itself to keep its library as up to date and as efficient as the needs of the district demand.

Similar help should be available in industrial areas

which are benefiting largely by the operation of the De-rating Act. It was part of the policy involved in that legislation that loss of rates by the exemption from local rating of manufacturing establishments should be made up by direct grants from national funds to the localities concerned.

In how many cases, I wonder, have the public libraries gained advantage by these grants. Take the case of such a place as Dagenham, a very considerable area, largely occupied by great manufacturing concerns exempt from paying large proportions of the local rates levied to the full amount on residential and business property in the same district. Library provision for the whole population has to be made and although excellent results have come from a comparatively high library rate, it is unreasonable to expect a part of the population to make up the loss which partial exemption from rating has brought about.

I do not suggest for one moment that the instances I have quoted above are typical of the whole public library system in this country. Far from it, but I do insist that comparatively well-to-do places with libraries unworthy of them are far too numerous, and if the inhabitants themselves, through want of knowledge of what is possible for their libraries, feel unable to bring pressure to bear on their local authorities, a satisfactory way of providing that knowledge is for a report to be made by an inspecting body, pointing out what is lacking and what is possible in the

development of the libraries concerned. It is reasonable to suppose that such a report on libraries would have great weight in forming a substantial body of public opinion in its favour, just as similar reports on other public activities have done.

Mr. S. A. Pitt, in writing on a national library service<sup>1</sup> quotes the following statement by Mr. Asa Wynkoop:

“Every believer in the tax-supported public library believes it is the proper business of Government to compel the individual, whatever his private disposition and will in the matter, to contribute to its support. Justification for this belief is found in the fact that if the free library is an important factor in the general well-being of the community, then it is for the community *as a community*, and not thereby as an association of individuals, to provide this benefit; and as its advantages accrue to the social organism as a whole and not merely to individual members, the burden of its support should be borne by the whole community. Such being the theory on which the public library has made its claim and established a recognized legal status, the development of State Library Commissions and similar State agencies for promoting and improving public libraries has been nothing less than a logical necessity.”

These American State Library Commissions have

<sup>1</sup> “Some Impressions of the Public Library System of the United States of America” (Carnegie U.K. Trustees, 1926).

certain funds from which they make grants, usually for the provision of books, in deserving cases. In the report just quoted Captain Wright, the county librarian of Middlesex, points out that in all problems besetting the local library the State is available for advice. The field agent pays regular visits, and by conversation and demonstration keeps the librarian in touch with library development. "In the early days of commissions the field agents were sometimes met with suspicion, the local spirit of independence tending to antagonism, but to-day we are given to understand that not only are the visits of State workers welcomed, but that practically every day inquiries for advice and help are received. All this, it may be noted, has been carried out on a voluntary basis." Captain Wright's report thereon suggested separate State agencies for each of the four kingdoms in the British Isles and commissions appointed on similar lines to the community councils now operating. These commissions would be formed from representatives of smaller regional commissions, and would be responsible to a library division of the Board of Education for the development of libraries in each of the countries. They would, it is argued, cost very little to maintain but could be most effective. Financial aid from the State would, of course, be a natural corollary.

Much as co-operation and amalgamation have done so far and will accomplish in the future, it is perfectly clear that unless every library within an area is

prepared to take part in a regional scheme things cannot be satisfactory all round, but inspection by a State commission or similar body might do a lot by persuasion to bring every public library at any rate into a co-operative scheme. It is interesting to note in connection with this problem of co-operation or amalgamation that the *South Wales Argus* of August 6, 1935, reported that in reply to an application from Abergavenny Library Committee to the Carnegie Trustees for a book-purchase grant the Trustees advised complete amalgamation with Monmouthshire County Library; but it was pointed out that the development of the County Service had been greatly hampered by the general depression which had been particularly acute in Monmouthshire, with the result that expenditure in the County Library was much below the national average, and amalgamation at the moment was undesirable or impracticable. Surely this would be a case for a State grant.

I believe librarians would find inspection something to their advantage in the same way as their colleagues in America have done, and teachers in this country also. There is nothing for the progressive librarian and library to fear from an official inquiry. It is to be remembered that University and College libraries have been inspected at regular intervals for some time past and I am confident that many benefits have resulted to the institutions themselves and their librarians which would not have accrued for many

years without such inspection. It is largely through the reports of the University Grants Committee that the status and salary of the librarian in the University or College have been improved and the position of the library as an important and essential part of the institution more fully appreciated.

To sum up, I consider that any general system of inspection which would undermine local authority and initiative would be unwise and is unnecessary, but an official board of independent people of standing could be of the greatest assistance in producing improvements in unprogressive areas, whether caused by local apathy or economic impossibility, and in obtaining relief to those areas which are manifestly unfairly handicapped through migration of population, acute trade depression, and the operation of de-rating. I submit that the Library Association should have power to call the attention of the board to any abnormal situation in a library area and to ask for an inspection and report as to the circumstances which are causing the abnormality. In any case where the inspectors find that it is due to causes beyond the reasonable control of the library authority concerned the board should be enabled by grant or otherwise to assist in solving the problems which form a handicap.

In those cases where backwardness is found to be the result mainly of local disinterestedness and unwillingness on the part of the local authority to develop its library in accordance with accepted standards, a



report to that effect would undoubtedly arouse public opinion in the locality, whose inhabitants surely from very shame would see to it that things were quickly altered.

We are continually reading in the press letters and articles about the shortcomings of our public libraries and it is disastrous to the library movement as a whole, because national opinion is so liable to base its views on extreme cases.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CASE OF LONDON

IN 1927 the Public Library Committee drew particular attention to the need for active co-operation between the libraries of the metropolitan boroughs, and specifically mentioned the free interloan of books and the interchangeability of borrowers' tickets, enabling any London resident to borrow from any London library, as obviously desirable reforms. Referring to the proposal of the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association for the establishment, on a voluntary basis, of a Joint Libraries Advisory Board, the Committee expressed the hope that the recommendations of the branch would not be allowed to remain a dead letter. Can it be argued that very much progress has been made on the lines indicated since 1927? The valuable Union Catalogue then suggested has, of course, come into being and will undoubtedly be of the greatest value in showing how much of the world's literature is available in London public libraries, but I am still firmly convinced that no real and adequate improvement in London's library service can result from voluntary effort. I myself submitted a memorandum to the Committee very much on the lines of Mr. Pacy's Minority Report, which in my opinion, is more pertinent to-day than when it was

written. I believe I am right in saying that the Committee as a whole would have been prepared to support Mr. Pacy's recommendations had they not felt that the resulting storm in the London library world would have been so tremendous that it would have taken all attention from the Report's other recommendations, which were rightly considered to be of vital importance to the large sections of the population at that time without a library service of any kind. There is no doubt whatever that it is the existence of twenty-eight different library authorities in London which is the main hindrance to development on lines calculated to serve the community as a whole.

Those of us who were engaged in libraries when the London Government Act of 1899 came into operation can remember the anxiety expressed concerning it by those affected by the new law. Nobody who has seen the library systems in vogue before and after the 1899 Act came into force would think of arguing that the old were better than or even equal to the new. It is not to be expected that the library authorities of to-day will be wholehearted in supporting the recommendation of Mr. Pacy that the public libraries in London should be controlled by one authority, with uniform rating over the whole area, out those persons who are anxious only for the success and greater development of libraries for the benefit of the whole of London's population, are absolutely convinced that this is the only right solution of the

problem. And it really does not necessarily require new legislation for the purpose, but simply the goodwill of library authorities, who could, if they wished, transfer their powers to the London County Council, according to the provisions of the Public Libraries Act of 1919. To quote Mr. Pacy, "Obviously the area is too large for the system of one central library and branches, but a sub-division into, say, six or eight districts naturally suggests itself upon a consideration of the map; indicated by natural boundaries, means of communication, and similarity of characteristics. These districts would form main library systems, controlled by sub-committees, each with a librarian and staff. Generally these district library systems would approximate in management to the systems of large provincial cities, i.e. each would have a central reference library, branches, and delivery stations." This would inevitably result in better reference libraries, avoidance of duplication, and the availability of all the libraries in London for the purposes of loan to any registered borrower, irrespective of the area in London in which he resided.

The mere fact that the compilation of the Union Catalogue has shown only a comparatively small percentage of duplication is surely an argument for fewer and better reference libraries. If we assume, as in fairness we must, that the books in the various libraries are necessary ones, then we are forced to the conclusion that very few libraries are able to

obtain and house all the works which the student or consultant may require. Therefore the more complete the amalgamation of reference library stocks the greater becomes their value to readers. Assuming again that present duplication is small, the concentration of six reference library stocks into one district library will provide the reader with six times the choice of books on the subject of his study. The linking up of the various central libraries by the telephone and transport services would bring into being a library system unequalled anywhere in this country. It would naturally take time to bring it to full perfection. Existing buildings in some instances might not be satisfactory as central libraries, and distribution would be unequal for a time. It would, however, provide a golden opportunity for making employment in the construction of new buildings suitable for their purpose. Mr. Edward Sydney at the Library Association Conference at Manchester in 1935, stated in his paper,<sup>1</sup> "There are within seven miles of Charing Cross more out-of-date library buildings than in any area of equal size in the country." This was not said in any derogatory sense, but buildings erected between 1890 and 1919 were provided under penny rate limitations and mainly for indicator services. The large new buildings now required to meet present needs and future development obviously cannot be provided by a single

<sup>1</sup> "Service Standards for a Suburban Population" (*Library Association Record*, September 1935, pp. 391-397).

locality but are a matter for London as a whole, or, better still an object lesson for a board of inspection and a national grant from reconstruction funds.

There is hardly to be found in London an adequate public reference library comparable with what may be found in any provincial town serving a like population. The argument sometimes used in regard to the London public reference libraries is to the effect that London has the British Museum and other special libraries available, and that it is not necessary to establish very complete reference stocks in the public libraries, does not carry much weight. The British Museum library is restricted to persons over the age of twenty-one years who are doing research work on a definite subject and who are properly recommended by a responsible person. Most readers therefore during their most studious years have not access to the British Museum, while the libraries attached to London University are becoming less and less available to outsiders on account of the ever-growing pressure on their accommodation by their own students and teachers. No reference library with fewer than one hundred thousand judiciously selected works can be considered adequate in London, but half a dozen such would be possible under a single authority. There is no serious student who would object to a penny bus fare if it would provide him with such a choice of books as the scheme would bring into use.

Perhaps the most serious gap in London library

provision is the absence of a commercial library. The world's most important trade centre does not possess a public commercial library. While acknowledging the value of the Patent Office Library and the Guildhall Library to the City of London and its trade, they cannot, of course, attempt to carry out the intensive supply of information such as is provided in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, and other great industrial centres. It is not because such a library has never been considered necessary and desirable, but simply because no one locality could possibly provide for the whole of London; and there is at present no central authority for London which has the power to establish a public library even if it wished to do so. The commercial library has been established in many of our largest towns for the benefit of those concerned in buying or selling or manufacturing to sell.

Its main function is to collect and make readily available the most up-to-date and authoritative information likely to be useful to all branches of trade and industry in the locality. What Birmingham, Liverpool, and other places have found so valuable and used so tremendously must be as desirable in the great metropolis, but it is an institution which must be provided and maintained by London as a whole. It is nothing less than a crying shame that of all the great commercial centres of the world, London is the only one which cannot speak of its commercial

library, that really indispensable key to everyday business transactions and guide to future commercial development. What is required is a great commercial library situated in the heart of London and in close proximity to the Board of Trade and the Houses of Parliament, maintained from a general library rate levied upon the whole County of London, to which every inhabitant desirous of commercial information may go as a right and ask for it. In my next chapter I deal with some of the special matters with which the commercial library has to deal, from which it will be seen that no single borough library in London would be justified in making any attempt to cover the field.

Writing as one who is unaffected by any developments which may take place and with no other desire than to make London public libraries worthy of the place in which they are located, I unhesitatingly assert that they can never become thus while their management is divided between twenty-eight different authorities, some enthusiastic, some half-hearted, others, to say the least, apathetic, with no real co-operation, frequently not knowing or caring what the library next door is doing. A single library authority for London would replace uneconomical expenditure on insufficient service, by uniform policy, equal treatment and vastly improved services for much the same sum as is being spent now. It is not desired to reduce the amount spent on the libraries, but by co-ordination



and single-minded regulation to supply better goods from better buildings by a better paid staff of librarians and assistants. Speaking generally there is no body of municipal servants more keen on their tasks, more assiduous to duty, more anxious for the improvement of the institutions they serve than the public library staffs in London. It is not their work which one condemns, but that series of little kingdoms in London married and fast bound to a narrow parochialism which seems to have everlasting life. It is a most remarkable fact that if I have a borrower's ticket issued from a London borough library I am not entitled to borrow a book from a library round the corner belonging to an adjoining borough, but if I like to go to the public library at Brighton, or Blackpool, and many other resorts I am not considered an outsider there, and my London library ticket opens the door closed by my next-door neighbour.

Briefly summarized, the ideas I have suggested would result in a single library authority for London; six regional areas made up of the boroughs within each, from which the regional committee would be formed, the central committee comprising representatives from each of the regional committees; a great commercial library for London supported from the central funds; a uniform library rate levied on the whole county and distributed *pro rata* according to the number and needs of the population to be served; interavailability of borrowers' tickets; delivery service

from region to region by means of L.C.C. trams, etc.; an adequate reference library in each area; numerous depots for lending-library work; centralized book purchase to avoid duplication and other wasteful expenditure; and, not the least important matter, the substitution of existing inadequate, dull, dreary, and old-fashioned library buildings by adequate, bright, comprehensive, inviting buildings erected largely from contributions from national funds, incidentally providing a contribution to the solution of the unemployment problem and the improvement of the national assets.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COMMERCIAL LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE

IF there is one thing more than another that our public libraries lack it is an adequate commercial department. Many of our largest towns have made splendid efforts, but hundreds more have never attempted seriously to meet local needs. I have already pointed out that London itself has nothing of the nature essential to-day. It may be asked why a special commercial library or department is required if there is a well-organized public general library. The "Report of the Public Libraries Committee" (par. 369) stated that apart from the important commercial collection in the Guildhall Library, it was a matter for regret there were so few other collections in London, and went on to say, "We consider that every public library should make some effort to possess the more important literature relating to the staple industries of the area, that county libraries should establish special agricultural collections, and that the library of even a small commercial centre should acquire each year the more important commercial directories." "Co-operation with business and commercial firms appears hardly to exist." The commercial library is an absolute and daily necessity for the business man who requires up-to-date and reliable information upon all those

matters in commerce and industry with which he is concerned. It is quite clear that, although very large establishments may be in a position to provide an information department for their own exclusive use, there are multitudes of smaller concerns which cannot for financial or physical reasons attempt such a thing. In large numbers of cases they are not affected by the De-rating Act, they pay large sums in rates for the upkeep of the library, and yet their immediate and pressing need for information cannot be satisfied by the institution which they are compelled to support. As long ago as 1849 the Select Committee on Public Libraries recommended the establishment of special libraries for commerce, pointing out that the Hamburg Commercial Library was stated to have had a most beneficial influence on the character of the merchants of that town. For many years past I have in writing and speech advocated the systematic development of commercial libraries which would be (in the words of the 1849 report) "illustrative of the peculiar trade, manufactures, and agriculture of the place, and greatly favourable to the practical development of the science of political economy." I laid special stress on this function of the commercial library in an article in *Economica*, October 1921. Let us consider for a moment the particular purposes which the commercial library has ordinarily to serve. They vary in different localities, in accordance with the trend of industry. That is to say, the manufacturing town would be more interested

in the technical side and the process of manufacturing, the machines and tools which have to be used, the materials they require in the making of goods. Other places, such as ports, would not worry so much about the details of manufacturing processes as about export, import, and distribution of raw materials or manufactured goods, and matters of transport, customs, and tariffs, freight rates, commercial law, telegraphic codes and cable addresses, advertising, salesmanship, rates of exchange, and a hundred and one like matters. Not only so, for the information must be up to date, accurate, and full. It is obvious, therefore, that the average general library, minus the special commercial department, is not in a position to meet the reasonable if exacting demands of the commercial man. Trade periodicals representative of the chief local industries and trades are, of course, an essential feature in the commercial library, and the standard financial and industrial journals are equally vital. The largest towns would need to have a separate building or preferably an independent section of the same building, where ready access to the general reference library is available. The real purpose of this arrangement is to avoid the excessive duplication of common material, which must result if the two libraries are located some distance apart. Unfortunately it is not always possible to give the best results from one building. If the general library is not situated in close proximity to the main commercial part of the town any attempt

to give adequate service to the commercial community must be very much handicapped by distance. The busy merchant cannot afford to wait or even spend time to get from his establishment to the library. The telephone, of course, is a great asset, but much of the information required is of a character which only personal investigation can supply. It must be understood, of course, that the function of the *public* commercial library is something different from, in fact something complementary to, the *private* business library. This latter can deal with matters of a strictly confidential nature which are the concern of a particular concern only, and will contain facts and figures which might be of the greatest value to a competitive organization. The public library has to cater not for one particular firm or one commodity. Its commercial department must necessarily set itself out to supply data to all kinds of commercial concerns and relating to all kinds of commodities. It cannot give preference to any particular organization or establishment; neither can it guarantee to use its staff for any lengthy inquiry entailing considerable research. The private business library is maintained largely because its whole resources are available at the moment of asking for the benefit of those who provide it and for no others.

It is essential, in any case, that the public commercial library must be situated in the midst of the commercial community and therefore if the needs of the general public require that its library should be located in

some other part of the town, two distinct buildings must be operated. This question of location has undoubtedly been the reason in some instances for the non-provision of a commercial library, but it does not excuse the absence of the latter from the large industrial district. The Third Report of the Adult Education Committee on Libraries, 1918 [Cd. 9237], stressed the importance of commercial and technical libraries for every industry, and recommended a scheme whereby each industry would provide both main and secondary libraries, to be maintained by the industry itself. This Committee contained no professional librarian among its members, and the recommendations, as I pointed out in *Economica*, ignored the important factors already existing—books, buildings, and brains—in our public libraries. If an industry is able to maintain a special library and is willing to support it from its own finances, it would be a sheer waste of money to provide new buildings, and new stocks of books, let alone the skilled labour necessary, while municipalities, with that same aid, with nucleus resources and the brains already operating, were ready and willing to develop the commercial and technical sides of their library works to any extent that ways and means would allow. Naturally, those who pay or partly pay the piper expect to call the tune, or at any rate share the programme, but there is no reason to suppose that a mutually beneficial plan could not be arranged whereby the municipality provides the

buildings and the brains and some of the books, and the industry or industries the additional money extra to that produced by the library rate for the purchase of those special books, periodicals, and documents which appeal to the commercial community only.

However good may be the library in the business firm's own establishment, there are many occasions during a year when the public library has to be appealed to for further help. At the present time experience has shown that the kind of information which the commercial man requires, but which is too general for the specific needs of his own library, is not to be found in the public library. This information would be of the character to be found in statistical publications dealing with trade and commerce, emanating from all countries, which the private concern could hardly find room for, and that of a border-line semi-technical character which can hardly be said to lie within the province of the special business library and yet is usually avoided in the public library. The kind of literature, in fact, which is intended to help more than one branch of commerce and industry, works of an authoritative but distinctly general scientific or technical nature, which the business man would expect to find always available for reference only in the commercial department of the library.

It has to be admitted that the scientific and technological literature in libraries in the London area



is poor in quality and sadly lacking in quantity, and while it is quite obvious that no local library is in a position to spend large sums in improving those two sections of a library's collection, there is urgent necessity for a large development in the provision of the best general works on engineering, medical subjects, and economic and industrial science, as well as the best encyclopaedias, dictionaries, and directories generally outside the special field of the industrialist's own information bureau. It is the good fortune of London to possess great libraries like those of the British Museum, the Science Library, and the Patent Office, but even so conditions of service and location reduce their usefulness to the busy commercial man, and they cannot possibly be of the same value as would a special public commercial library in a central spot. Such a library with a trained staff devoted to the special needs of the commercial community would be a boon to industry and a potent factor in gaining practical sympathy for the public library movement. Libraries outside London serving industrial communities have even greater need of an adequate commercial department. Many of the largest towns, as I have already stated, have substantial commercial libraries, built up under great difficulties of finance and space solely because the demand was so great that it *had* to be met somehow. It is imperative that every public library outside the London area and serving an industrial community, however limited, should at

the earliest moment set out to provide a commercial department adequate to the needs of the locality. Co-operation between the library, the local Chamber of Commerce and the representatives of the Board of Trade, wherever such are established, should render possible the provision of a commercial service of the greatest utility. It would be very advantageous if all three of the institutions were located nearby each other. Is there any reason why they should not all be approached through the same entrance? I believe it is possible, and certainly desirable, for the Chamber of Commerce and consular departments to be housed in annexes of the library building, their publications and such library material as they possess accommodated on the shelves of the public commercial library, the staff of the latter being responsible for the arrangement and preservation of the material and service to readers. In this way the question of housing books and documents would be solved, and the latest information, in unpublished form, would be readily available in the official quarters. Concentration of this character would save the time of the business community, and mean a real economy to those sections accommodated in the library, while the latter could certainly expect to be compensated for its services by grants from those interested, and directly and indirectly by the users of the library.

The experiment in Sheffield described by Mr. Lamb in his paper at the ASLIB Conference at Cambridge

in September 1935,<sup>1</sup> is a practical illustration of the mutual benefits derived from co-operation between the public library and industry. The idea behind the scheme was that the special libraries in the area and those firms which had libraries of their own should pool resources. Six libraries are concerned in the plan and thirteen works libraries, the books stocked in the latter being catalogued under the supervision of the City Library Authorities, who also accepted the full organization of the scheme, and the co-ordination of catalogue and periodical cards, a Union List of the latter being kept at the City Library, to the Science and Technology Department of which all requests for loan have to be made.

This Union List contains nearly eleven hundred titles, and it was stencilled and copies made available for those participating. All inquiries for periodicals have to be made to the City Library, the list giving no indication as to the location of the items contained on it. Members undertake to notify the City Librarian of any variations in their acquisitions every six months. The scheme has been in operation since February 1933, and there is not the least doubt that it has been of great benefit to the Sheffield district.

It offers, also, opportunities for avoiding unnecessary duplication of periodicals and books, and thus releases money for additional non-duplicate literature. A scheme

<sup>1</sup> "The Sheffield Experiment—How it is Succeeding," by J. P. Lamb.

of this character is surely possible in every area of a like nature, whether it be large or small.

I suggest also that the commercial department of a library need not stop at the mere provision of special books and periodicals. I believe it can be made a real object lesson in economics. The commercial library of the future should also have its permanent exhibition of the staple articles manufactured in the locality, or pictorial representations of such giving a history in pictures of the development of machines and processes. I don't mean to suggest that locomotive engines and great machines should be hauled up the library steps and deposited in a room, but facsimiles of these and small articles of common use with notes showing the cost of manufacture, the percentage due to wages, etc., with comparative figures of the cost of foreign competitive articles, would provide such a lesson in economics as no text-book could supply, a permanent piece of economic history, and a series of study in design of the greatest practical value. Further a close connection between these objects and the literature about them in the library is easily procured by the use of the same classification codes for books and exhibits.

The smaller place would find it a simpler matter than the big town, because its products would naturally be limited. The exhibits should not be intended to serve as an advertising agency, but information regarding makers and suppliers would be

available on request in the library. The main purpose would be to satisfy an inquirer with a full and appropriate answer to such a question as this, which I myself have had to meet, "Is there any firm here manufacturing canteen cans something like the sample I have with me?" And the reply should be, "Various designs are exhibited in the commercial library, from which you may gather full details of any one which appeals to you." This is not fantastic. It is a practicable possibility wherever the will exists to provide the accommodation. It is a necessary complement to the ordinary work of a commercial library, an essential department of the public library of the future, and one which has undoubtedly done a great service to the district in which it has been installed, by proving to business and industry that the public library has something for every section of the community, not only the poor and destitute, and as such is deserving of all the support which the district can give.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOME PROBLEMS TO BE MET BY UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

IT is gratifying to find that developments in connection with university library buildings are not only being carried out or considered almost everywhere in this country where a university education is provided, but that some of the older ideas prevalent concerning the character of library provision in these institutions are rapidly dying out in face of the many criticisms to which they have been subjected in recent years. Book stacks of many floors one above the other, or book towers as they are called on the Continent, are features of the new buildings at Cambridge and London, and, perhaps even more surprising, the former has actually introduced colour schemes into the furniture and equipment of some of its reading rooms. All this is to the good, but there still appears to be a sort of half-hearted acceptance of new ideas in some of the proposals suggested for new university library buildings in some places. It will be remembered that in the new public library in Manchester the same supports which carry the book stacks carry also the main floors of the building. The stack floors in the Manchester Library are those specially provided by the makers of the shelving and are only three inches in thickness,

but some of the plans for new university libraries represent an indisposition to discard stone and concrete, with the result that concrete floors, a foot thick, independent of the shelving, have been arranged for, and every floor is a sheer waste of nine inches. That is to say in the case of a book stack extending to nine stories one whole floor would be lost, or, to put it in another way, a steel structure with the special three-inch floorings would house as many books on eight floors as one with nine floors constructed of steel and concrete. This represents either a big loss of shelf accommodation or a considerable increase in the cost of construction. Whichever happens is a serious matter in these times when the maximum accommodation is required at the least possible expenditure. There appears to be no reason, except possibly prejudice, why, in every new building where book towers are to be a feature, steel alone should not be the structural material. The loss of space occasioned by the use of concrete floors and independent steel shelving affects every section of the building, for each floor represents two stack floors, which in steel alone need only fourteen feet for height, and at least fifteen feet six inches in the other case. While one might argue that the additional height to the ordinary rooms is an advantage, it can certainly be claimed that it is not essential, and cost again is a prime factor. Greece and Rome still seem to have far too great an influence in the plans of some of our

new buildings to the disadvantage of the convenience of the library. At the same time one would rather have less of the grain elevator appearance about them than is evident in the new University Library at Cambridge.

To my mind, perhaps the most disturbing problem for the librarians of our university and other large libraries is the question of the arrangement of the books in the stacks themselves. Most of these libraries have a limited amount of open access and many large libraries have classified their contents on one of the accepted schemes. But this has caused difficulties of accommodation and arrangement in the stacks where the close classification has been adhered to. Since 1929, after two or three visits to the Continent, I have several times spoken and written about the advantages which Continental university libraries claim for the method they adopt. Open access is generally non-existent there, but the librarians argue that the system they use provides practically all the advantages which are claimed for open access and that it is definitely superior in regard to accommodation and storage problems. As is generally realized in this country, any library of large and rapid growth is always faced with the problem of where and to what extent will additional shelf space be required during the ensuing year or two. If a library adheres to a close classification by the Decimal, Congress, or any other accepted scheme, space for growth must be left in almost every section of the classification, and if one such section,



by gift or otherwise, receives an abnormal number of additions during the period, it frequently means the wholesale removal of a large part of the library's contents, if the correct order is to be maintained. It is well realized also that a book may only be placed in one subject heading on the shelves, though it may treat of two or many more at equal length. Composite volumes such as the transactions of learned societies, etc., can obviously be placed only under a general heading, and our Continental colleagues argue that it is not true to say that by close classification all related literature on a subject will be found in the same location on the shelves of the library. The larger the library and the more scientific its character so much greater, they argue, is the difficulty of locating "like with like." The arrangement of the books in the stacks of many of the Continental libraries is simply by a progressive number, a different sequence being used for books more than ten inches in height, and even a third sequence for folio volumes. In this way a work on shipping may come next on the shelf to one on philosophy and that again next to a volume of poetry, but shelving need only be added as required at the end of the run, and the librarians claim they are able to calculate more exactly the approximate demands for new shelf accommodation over a given period. The essential requirement, however, where such shelf arrangement is the vogue, is an analytical subject catalogue, which, it is claimed, *does* enable one

to bring all books and articles on a given topic in the library together, no matter where the particular item may be located. Thus any reader may really discover, *in one place*, the whole of the library's contents which deal with the matter in which he is interested. My reply to this argument has been to agree up to a point. In open access sections a reader is able by personal examination of a work to determine straight away whether it is likely to be of service, while with the other arrangement a reader must ask to have every work in turn *brought* to him for examination. This probably means the filling in of a number of forms and if half a dozen books are required an assistant has probably to go to as many different places in the stacks, instead of finding them practically next to each other in a close classification. This is met with the statement that application has to be made for the majority of the books in the large reference libraries, that the finding and replacing of books is easier by the progressive number, and the fact that composite volumes required have in any case to be sought for in different places in a close classification where a detailed subject catalogue also exists, and are frequently missed altogether where such a catalogue is not available, render it doubtful whether any greater satisfaction can be given to the reader thereby. Add to this the greater wear and tear on the books from frequent handling, the probability that considerable numbers of books may be misappropriated, and the

necessity of measures to counteract this latter result definitely leaves the advantage to the Continental idea, plus the fewer difficulties in regard to book accommodation. In a later chapter I am able to give details of the planning of a very large new library in America, by which readers are not only given access to all the books in a library, but they are also provided with proper seating accommodation in every section of the stacks. I believe that before many years have passed these ideas in planning will be followed here. Until such moment arrives, however, the problems I have stated above must be met by more familiar methods. While I feel strongly the advantage of open access in certain circumstances, I am bound to say that readers I have met who have used libraries under both arrangements are not generally inclined to agree that the close classifications used in many libraries here possess the advantages frequently claimed for them and many readers emphatically condemn them. The crux of the question seems to lie with the subject catalogue. It has, of course, to be complete, accurate, and fully analytical if the "closed" library is to give the maximum service, and many libraries here would argue that the additional advantages to be gained from such a catalogue are not sufficient to justify the vastly increased amount of clerical work necessitated by it. Our Continental friends would reply that the time taken to discover sources of information among composite works in the classified library could

very much better be spent on more complete cataloguing. Mr. Wilks, in his paper at the Library Association Conference at Manchester in September 1935,<sup>1</sup> expresses his doubts whether a subject catalogue on cards is necessary in a university library and his belief that the average undergraduate gets on very well without it. This is probably true, and if only undergraduates had to be considered the problem would be much simpler. Professors, teachers, research students, and frequently large numbers of the general public have to be catered for, while the character of a particular library, university or other, may be such as to demand a subject catalogue, and on cards. I think I am perfectly safe in arguing that during my twenty-five years' service as librarian of what is now one of the largest libraries in the kingdom, much the more frequent inquiry was for direction to works on a *subject*, which even the close classification was unable to suggest.

In a library where government publications form the backbone of the work done there a subject catalogue is a vital necessity. Separate printed lists are issued by one or two countries, but these can never be right up to date, and if they were the loss of time involved in consulting each list in turn would be very considerable. Libraries dealing largely with trade and

<sup>1</sup> "The Modern University Library: Standards for To-day," by John Wilks, M.A., F.L.A. (*Library Association Record*, Sept. 1935, pp. 376-382).

commerce, financial and other statistics must be in a position to locate the most up-to-date information at a moment's notice, and only by means of an adequate and comprehensive catalogue can this be done with the maximum of ease and satisfaction. On the other hand it must be recognized that the larger the library, the bigger the catalogue must be, the greater the expense for cabinets to hold the cards, and the floor and wall space required for their accommodation. As I have pointed out in my *Manual of Library Organization* the sheaf catalogue has many things to recommend it, and very large libraries like the Peace Library at The Hague, and the Picton Library in Liverpool swear by it and will use no other form. It occupies much less space than the card catalogue, entries being made on paper slips, sometimes several entries on one slip, it is portable, each volume being easily carried to a table or to some lighter spot for consultation, it is more easily duplicated, and is, of course, far less expensive. Its one particular defect, compared with the card catalogue, is that it is not so readily kept up to date, the insertion of new entries being a longer process than that of putting a card in its order. It also requires careful handling when additions are being made. I have seen instances when the unlocked sheaf has been accidentally dropped and the contents strewn all over the place, necessitating a long job in re-arrangement.

There is no need for me to plead at length for some

standardized cataloguing code, or rather for the general adoption of any existing code, in university libraries. Mr. Wilks, in the article quoted above, has laid full stress on this question. I will only emphasize its outstanding importance for the reader, and the desirability of keeping the work of cataloguing separate from ordinary routine work, in order to avoid the hopeless inconsistencies and variations in method where the work is done by many hands as opportunity occurs, even if each worker has been trained in the same school. What is, perhaps, more noticeable than any other fault in cataloguing method, is that of alphabetizing. In my view, not more than 20 per cent of assistants in libraries have any definite views as to order, especially where the same word is used for subject, author, place, and person. Even on the general question of alphabetical arrangement we are in need of some definitely agreed scheme. For instance, is the index in Brown's Subject Classification the right method to follow, or is the correct order, as I believe, "something follows nothing?" It is not to be expected that any librarian of a large library, inheriting cataloguing ideas of long standing, will hurriedly agree to scrap the whole, but, at least, new starters should have some general consensus of opinion to follow. I believe most librarians would be willing to sacrifice individual opinions on some points for the benefit of a code of author, subject, and alphabetizing rules which could be generally approved. Should a scheme

of centralized cataloguing such as the Library of Congress plan, which now supplies some thousands of libraries in the United States, become the practice here, this matter also would be immensely simplified, but even the receipt of Congress cards has not removed the difficulties of alphabetical arrangement.

Among other matters which the university library of the future must concern itself with closely may be mentioned departmental libraries, the main arguments concerning which I have discussed fairly fully in my *Manual of Library Organization*, and inter-university co-operation in the loan of books and the purchase of periodicals. In regard to the latter it has been suggested that a grouping of supply centres will avoid unnecessary duplication of purchases and provide for the representation of certain periodicals not to be found in the libraries of universities here. The present position is that some periodicals are taken almost everywhere while others of importance are hardly represented at all, largely on account of their cost. A point to be remembered is that any wholesale dropping of periodicals as a result of co-ordinated purchase might be a serious blow to the organs in question. Even now many of them have a precarious existence and a decrease of say fifty subscriptions in one country may bring a further handicap in the almost certain to be reduced advertisement revenue. This will mean an increased subscription possibly for the remaining subscribers, or it might even bring

about the demise of some journals. These matters are dealt with by Mr. Wilks in his paper quoted above, and there is no room in this volume for the detailed arguments I should like to put forward.

One matter of outstanding importance to my mind is that of the hours of opening, or better still perhaps is it to say the hour of closing of university libraries. Very few of these are open in the evenings for any length of time, but it seems very desirable that opportunity should be given to people having business in the daytime to make use of the university library for purposes of their own research and study. Especially is this a much-needed reform in industrial centres. It can, of course, be argued that the university library is intended particularly to serve the needs of the students and the teaching staff and that, however much the authorities might wish to admit outsiders, the accommodation is already insufficient for their special needs, while the hours of opening are adequate for students and staff. It is also argued in certain places that evening opening has been tried experimentally and the number of readers taking advantage of it has not justified its permanent continuance. My reply to these arguments is that many universities are largely financed by the locality, municipal or commercial or both, and that facilities should be provided for those who pay the piper or their representatives, so that in those instances where accommodation is restricted and early closing in force the evenings could be given



over to outside readers, especially if the argument holds good that existing hours are adequate for the university's own people. The short experimental periods tried seem to me to prove nothing, and it is not only numbers which have to be considered. It is more a question of the importance of the work which might be carried out if facilities were available. Of course, the real objection is shortage of staff and insufficient finance for additional maintenance charges. This does not really affect the principle of the thing. Given the desirability of additional facilities, the library of the future must make every possible effort to cater for public needs in research facilities, remembering that directly or indirectly money provided from the public purse in most cases helps to keep the institution in being.

Despite the advantages derived from the loan of books to the borrowing library, the university library is emphatically one for reference, and increased lending must mean more and more books unavailable within the institution. Even if the works loaned are confined to those not in *general* demand they must be books *likely* to be wanted, otherwise requests for their loan mean nothing. The easier it is made for outside readers to work within the institution the more likely it is that loan demands will be less of a handicap. I would refer everyone interested in the future of university libraries to Mr. Wilks's paper for information on many other problems which have got to be solved. None

of them is I think new, but they have been examined as a collective whole in an able way by Mr. Wilks, and what I have written in this chapter must be read as complementary to the article and as looking at some of the requirements from a new angle.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LIBRARY AND ITS CLIENTS: AMENITIES AND ATTRACTIONS FOR READERS

IN the concluding chapter of this work I describe the ideal library building of the near future, based on the actual plans for a new library in America, which I have the privilege of making use of. While these may represent the maximum of comfort, convenience, and adaptability, it may yet take a long time before such a building becomes the common type. Nevertheless several of its features may easily be included in any new structure in this country. Rebuilding has become a vital necessity in many places, and library users have the right to expect much more consideration of the reader's comfort than has been given to it in the planning of the older libraries.

Every new public library should be built on the unit system, by which the fullest adaptability and flexibility is procurable. These units consist of steel movable partitions, taking the place of fixed internal walls or screens. Each unit is made to a uniform length of nine feet, with glazed upper panels, interlocking with each other and its ends locked to the floor. At any moment these partitions are easily moved and locked into new positions, thus allowing any room or department or section of the stacks to be enlarged

or decreased in size at will. The nine-foot length has been chosen because it represents three standard book-cases and thus adjusts itself to the needs of book-storage as well as reading-rooms. I have personally experienced the advantages of these units, the ease with which they accommodate themselves to requirements, and the simplicity with which the whole floor of a library can be made into one large room for the purposes of lectures or other special requirements. For branch libraries in particular the system is admirable. Instead of having to provide a structure of the ordinary fixed size, or some very temporary building for a population of uncertain growth and varying density, the unit system can be adjusted to the needs of the smallest community or of a quickly growing population; to the fewer people per acre resulting from more spacious planning now compulsory or the larger numbers who may inhabit the large blocks of flats which will be inevitable in some districts. It is to be hoped also that new libraries will have their catalogues and inquiry departments outside actual reading-rooms, and ensure the maximum of quiet within them. It has always been a mystery to me why library authorities do not insist on a roof reading-room. Valuable space on flat-roofed buildings is wasted, generally without sufficient reason. What a great attraction it would be to readers to be able to sit and read in the warmer months in a room whose walls consisted of sliding steel partitions, which can be

opened wide at will to admit as much fresh air and sunlight as can be obtained, and which in the colder months can be adjusted to give the maximum of natural lighting to a room adequately warmed by electric tubular heating apparatus. A most attractive, comfortable apartment, with a few plants or shrubs in ornamental tubs to please the eye, making an ideal place for the reading of the more serious reviews and periodicals, and suitable for lectures, meetings, wireless talks, and ever so many things without encroaching upon other departments or requiring additional ground space. Naturally I shall be told of the existence of smoky chimneys near by which would prevent the open sides from being used and possibly other undesirable elements might prevail in some places. Well, there may be some towns or sites unsuitable for the idea, but it is an indisputable fact that most places can bring no other objection but tradition against the innovation.

Without wishing to particularize, or disparage the work of library committees in the past, it is a fact that many committees are appointed without regard to the qualifications of those who compose them. Some members, the minority in many cases, realize the importance of the library to the community, others are absolutely indifferent, and still others imagine their sole function is to cut down expenditure and that a book at a high price must be cut out of the list of suggestions simply because of its cost. A committee

of a library should consist of persons who, whatever their personal views of the world's problems may be, are determined that the library shall represent all sections of thought and serve the cultural and social wants of every section alike; a committee which, having determined upon such a policy, will place the whole responsibility for its carrying out upon the librarian, *the person who is best in a position to know what the community itself needs and expects from the library.*

One of the first developments hoped for is the removal of the locked barriers in open access libraries—that peculiar item of furniture which suggests to the reader that he is a prospective thief, a suspect, and that he cannot be trusted. Nothing in recent years has given me so much delight as the announcement in the *Library Association Record* for December 1935 (p. 577) that the new lending library in the Leicester Public Libraries has no wickets. “It has been decided to make the experiment of giving the public unrestricted access and to trust to supervision and public good sense for the prevention and avoidance of abuse.” All honour to Leicester for this display of sound common sense and the spirit of true librarianship. I believe the Leicester public will fully co-operate to justify the experiment.

While open access has proved a great boon to the reading public there seems to be no reason why the shelves should be half filled with shabby looking

volumes and out-of-date works. Surely the show of books should represent the finest goods in the library. A shopkeeper does not as a rule exhibit inferior brands of goods in his windows, or if he does they are at least clean and new, and a library ought to arrange its goods on the same lines, having the shoddy material handy if you like but out of sight of the public. Some of our London reference libraries are not a good advertisement for the library movement. When one sees, as I have done, recently, the 1890 edition of Anson's *Law and Custom of the Constitution* on the open shelves of one of London's largest reference libraries, the only edition among the stock, it makes one wonder what some libraries hope to accomplish by such a display. It was not the only out-of-date work on the shelves by a long way, but it is a good example. It is not only useless to the student of the constitution, but it is positively harmful to the ordinary seeker after facts, who could not be blamed for taking it to be an authoritative reliable edition, seeing the place of honour given to it. Our lending libraries can be made attractive and comfortable with a little consideration. A chair or two for the weary, a couple of tables with regularly filled flower vases, some low show cases to contain the choicest of the new additions to the library or representative works on some topic of the moment, windows sufficiently low to enable the sills to be used for exhibiting to the outside world samples of what may be obtained in larger quantities

inside, would alter the atmosphere of most lending libraries tremendously. The detachment of a special member of the staff for floor duty—"shop-walking" in reality—would do much to bring about an increase in that personal touch so much to be desired, and so readily appreciated by the reader when it is forthcoming. The location of the responsible librarian in a position which every incomer to the library must notice is another long overdue improvement. Not because it is desired to bring every inquiry to the chief officer in the department, but to enable the inquirer to realize that even if he is attended to by the newest junior, the latter is not the final arbitrator, but an assistant who will be all the keener to ascertain a reader's wants when he is backed up by an experienced officer possessing all the essential bibliographical tools, which he also knows how to handle.

The rules of most libraries need modernizing and need to be less a copy of those first used eighty years ago, phrased in more homely language, and intended to serve more as instructions and guidance how to make the most and best use of the library, rather than a legal document incorporating in its mystifying phraseology dire punishments of various kinds. The guarantee system should be wiped out, the monetary penalties should give place to moral education, second tickets should be available for any class of work, age limits should be abolished as an arbitrary rule, tickets issued at other libraries should be valid elsewhere,



and the hours of opening in many places should be drastically revised. Just imagine a library in a suburban town with a population approaching 50,000, which opens at 11 a.m. and closes all departments at 8 p.m., and on one day actually is accessible from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. only. In this particular place the majority of the male residents go to business in London before 10 a.m. and get back home between 6.30 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. What earthly chance is there for them to make use of the reading-room or lending library in the circumstances. But they have to contribute their share of the library rate all the same. It seems extremely difficult to get some library authorities to realize that the library is meant for the public and not the public for the library. One of the problems of the future for libraries to face is the part they are going to play in providing opportunities for the right use of the increased leisure which is inevitable for the mass of the population. It will not be solved by arguing that if the individual has more time to himself then the library can be opened for an even shorter period, but by recognizing the fact that if a library is to take its proper place in the life of the community it must strive to draw to it every section; every cultural movement, every social effort being centred in the public library. We have in London refreshment houses open all night whereby the traveller, the night worker, and others can get food for the body, but every library authority deems it undesirable to

provide food for the mind and mental recreation for a period of at least twelve hours.

Library buildings must allow greater provision in future for the accommodation of discussion groups and meetings of various literary and social societies. I have already mentioned the advantages attaching to the steel unit partitions which will enable two departments to be made into one temporarily or a portion of one to be shut off to accommodate smaller meetings. As pointed out by Mr. Nowell in his paper at the Library Association Conference in September 1935,<sup>1</sup> "the public library in this way increases its scope, gathers in regular attendance a body of intelligent readers keenly interested in at least one subject represented on the shelves, and incidentally makes for itself an army of supporters who sing its praises in season and out of season." In addition such societies as possess libraries of their own would undoubtedly be willing to deposit them at the public library, the latter having the right to make use of them in return for their control and administration by a trained staff. There is no question that the societies themselves would gain in membership through having satisfactory accommodation, while an additional advantage to the library would be the considerable publicity, direct and indirect which would result from such an arrangement. This matter of publicity is much more important in

<sup>1</sup> "Minimum Standards for Library Service," by C. Nowell (*Library Association Record*, Sept. 1935, pp. 365-371).

its consequences than is sometimes imagined. I do not agree with those librarians who argue that they do not want further publicity for their libraries because the demand for books is already greater than they can efficiently meet with the money available. This seems to me an entirely wrong attitude to take up. The very fact that a library is not equal to the demands made upon it is in itself an argument for publicity. I believe that a continuously increasing demand upon the library would compel even the most parsimonious body, however reluctantly, to make adequate provision to meet it.

Whether library authorities will ever be prevailed upon to do as many American libraries do and take advantage of local pageants and processions to advertise their institution is difficult to forecast, but if the local milkman and greengrocer find it beneficial to business to enter a decorated cart for every local festival, it seems that libraries, whose goods may be obtained without extra cost, stand to reap considerable advantages also. We are improving anyway. Many libraries since the Jubilee celebrations in 1935 have been flood-lighted regularly. All this is to the good, and will be even more effective when every library in question has the name of the institution visible. Some which I have seen brilliantly floodlighted have nothing to suggest what the building is. Why do our libraries not have the words "Public Library" in neon lights high up on the roof. Go to a town at night and from a long way off you can determine the position

of the local cinema and theatre, but the library has to be sought for if wanted and is not remembered if not wanted. The detection of its location, however, would make many a person want to use it. Blazon the name and address of your library on corporation vehicles, on street lamp posts, and other suitable observation spots. It is much easier at present to find the way to tennis courts, public baths, and lavatories than to the public library. Other methods of publicity—hospital and works libraries, school libraries, wireless discussion groups, gramophone rooms, etc., etc., are already well known, but nothing like as universal in operation as they should be. I would like especially to emphasize the possibilities of publicity and increased revenue likely to result from the Leyton Council's experiment of building a library above a block of shops. Such a plan must necessarily make the library's presence known, and the financial help to be derived from the rents accruing from the shops and the reduction of maintenance charges which must result are economies of real value to the library. There really is no end to what might be done in this direction. A civic centre, housing library, local government offices, cultural societies, chambers of commerce, etc., all in one block, ever expanding, with the library as the Mecca of all, is not a fanciful Utopia, but a desirable and intensely practical scheme.

Many a library is suffering to-day from an excess of unnecessary clerical work and documentation. Any-

thing which makes it easier for the reader is to be appreciated, but I know of libraries where no fewer than four different accession registers are kept and almost the same details are given in each, albeit in a different order. In some libraries a copy of every invoice is made in a register, and the accession register repeats all the information and renders it unnecessary to keep anything but totals in the invoice book. Systematic stocktaking is another waste of time. It may accidentally discover hidden books, and if it meant the recovery of lost books it might be justified, but its main result is to make much more public than is desirable the fact that it is possible to purloin the library's stock. As a matter of fact the loss of a book in demand will automatically be notified if it is asked for and cannot be traced. If its loss has to wait for the annual stocktaking before it is noticed, then I venture to suggest it is not worth hours and hours of work to find out that it is missing. I smile sometimes to read in an annual report that "six volumes were not accounted for." It is well known that some of those accounted for were equally well lost.

Even Cambridge University is satisfied with an occasional census of portions of its stock, and as a general rule the cost to the library in time and clerical work is much greater than that of the books "unaccounted for." Mr. Nowell in his paper already quoted has forestalled me again by suggesting that an annual census is all that is required in most cases,

and being much more rapid a process is consequently much more economical. Regular dusting and examination of stock should be a matter of routine.

There are of course many points in organization which one could write pages about. Above I have tried to bring to mind some of the more important ones, especially those which, although apparently revolutionary, are just as necessary and equally practicable for adoption.

To summarize this chapter. What I have advocated is more elastic, more attractive, more comfortable buildings; expansible interior partitions; roof reading-rooms; more sympathetic committee members; removal of barriers and wicket gates in open access departments; the exhibition of worth-while books, and the hiding of the shoddy looking and the out-of-date material; rest-chairs and a decorated table or two in the lending department; modernizing and humanizing of the rules and regulations; earlier opening and later closing of suburban libraries in particular; closest co-operation with local cultural and social societies; greater publicity; the minimum of documentation and clerical work. Is there any library in the country which is in a position to say that it is faultless in regard to every one of the above matters, even those of which it does not disapprove in principle?

## CHAPTER VI

### LIBRARY STAFFS AND SALARIES

IN the *Library Association Record* for April and July 1934 will be found the recommendations of the Association in regard to salaries. If the scales therein suggested were universally applied it could not be argued that they are really satisfactory, although they are much in advance of current practice. But, unfortunately, very few libraries can claim to have applied these scales, and it is not easy to suggest anything, except moral pressure, which can assure them in future. I suppose that if libraries were brought directly and completely under Government control, all appointments would come within the general Civil Service scheme and something like uniformity would be established in the different grades. I have already expressed the view that Government control is unnecessary and undesirable, and therefore for the purposes of my argument the question of including library staffs in the national Civil Service is ruled out. Even if such an arrangement came about, it would still be doubtful whether librarians could anticipate a salary scale commensurate with the character of the services expected and the high technical qualifications and academic standard now looked for from them. Is it not possible, working through the Library Association,

to place librarians in the same position as teachers, doctors in public establishments, or even architects? It is well known that the British Medical Association is able to ensure that medical men appointed to hospitals and similar institutions shall receive salaries conforming to those considered satisfactory by the Association. Doctors, however, are in a more favourable position than librarians. The person appointed to these particular medical posts must naturally be qualified, and a registered medical practitioner. The British Medical Association in the past has refused to allow qualified people to accept appointments where the salaries offered have not, in the view of the Association, been adequate, and have thus been able to determine the minimum amount of salary to be paid in each case, for no unqualified person could be appointed and no qualified person would dare to accept a position if the B.M.A. disapproved. Librarians, however, cannot at present depend upon the Library Association's power to compel local authorities to pay salaries such as might be deemed reasonable minima, and there is nothing to prevent an authority appointing a person without technical qualifications if it cared to do so. There is, of course, a good deal of risk being run by any authority which acts in such a way and the Library Association is at any rate in a position to-day to make things uncomfortable for any library authority which unreasonably defies the reasonable demands of the Association, but there have been several instances



within the last year or two where protests have been made by the Association without producing any better results. At the same time it has to be recognized that in many more cases the intervention of the Association has brought gratifying results. Assuming that a Board of Inspectors such as I have suggested in Chapter I were in operation I believe it would not be difficult to ensure reasonable salaries and conditions for any chief librarians.

Whenever the Library Association were dissatisfied with the conditions attaching to an appointment, it would ask the Inspectors to inquire into the case, and if no satisfactory agreement could be arranged, a recommendation should be sent to the Ministry of Health, which should then refuse to recognize such an appointment. I believe the mere fact that action of such kind were possible, and likely in certain circumstances, would enable the Library Association to ensure that the salaries for responsible posts would be at least adequate without having to do more than draw the attention of the local authority to the Association's minimum requirements. I would refer readers to the article by Mr. L. R. McColvin in the *Library Association Record* for September 1934 for a very clear statement of what is desirable in the salaries and conditions of service of librarians and their staffs, and the qualifications which may reasonably be expected in those officials. The great difficulty has usually been the small library, each of which would naturally argue that it could

not afford to pay the scales laid down without an impossibly large increase in the library rate levied. One alternative remedy, the unification of the control of libraries in a number of specified areas, by which the number of *chief* librarians would be reduced and higher salaries paid to those remaining, would certainly not be willingly accepted by the smaller authorities concerned. Yet it is impossible to procure a library service of the highest character and greatest efficiency *throughout the whole country* if the best brains and most expert administrators are to be confined to the largest centres of population, and here again it appears that some modicum of national control is necessary to put the staffs of our libraries on a footing at least equal to that of teachers. In the *Report of the Public Libraries Committee* [Cmd. 2868], 1927, paragraph 275, it is stated that the salaries of headmasters—in secondary schools—are normally not less than £600, “and they may rise to £1,500 or more.” In the succeeding paragraph the Committee express the opinion that “the trained librarian should be paid no less than the trained teacher, and that the one profession should not be less attractive than the other.” “The remuneration of its library staff will be one of the tests of the value attached by a community to its library service.” We find that in towns with a population of from 20,000 to 50,000, 75 librarians out of 88 were receiving salaries of less than £400 a year, while 8 in the same group were receiving less than

£200 a year! What is the value attached to their library services by these particular communities? And, unfortunately, it is always these bad cases which the public seem so familiar with. Extremes always get stressed, and so far as librarians are concerned there are no extreme cases on the high side of salaries. In my opinion there should be no properly qualified chief librarian anywhere with a salary of less than £600 a year. There are many instances of excellent fellows, keen, energetic, highly qualified librarians, full of ideas and initiative, who are compelled to accept a miserable remuneration if they wish to make any progress in the library profession.

Salary, I agree, is not the only thing a librarian should worry about. There are many joys he gets from his work which are not available in another profession. In particular there is the fact that his work is for humanity, and what he does brings benefit to the community as a whole and not simply financial advantage to an individual. At the same time, if the library profession is to attract men and women of the highest standards in education and ability, it must be able to compete on financial grounds with other professions. I am not suggesting that present and past librarians do not, or did not possess these qualifications. There are scores of names representing librarians of absolutely the best type, who have served the public in a manner not to be surpassed, but who were drawn into librarianship as much by their love

for, and faith in, the cause, as by the prospect of becoming millionaires some day.

I hope that in the near future the Library Association will be able to recommend some improvements in the scales they have approved recently. In certain cases there is far too great a tendency to have a very wide difference between the salary paid to the chief librarian and those to his chief assistants. University libraries seem to suffer particularly from this disproportionate payment. For the library up to the large medium the minimum salaries should be somewhat on these lines:

Chief Librarian	.	.	.	.	£600 a year
Sub-Librarian	.	.	.	.	300 „
Senior Assistants	.	.	.	.	200 „
Senior Juniors	.	.	.	.	100 „

The absolute juniors on the staff if they have passed matriculation or its equivalent should not be paid a less sum than 25s. a week, which should attract the right type of individual on leaving the secondary school, and as soon as he has shown ability and gained a first certificate in librarianship he should be placed in the next higher rank. It seems only right that, even if it means that certain desirable departments cannot be operated, the members of the staff should be paid satisfactory salaries. It is more important to make the labourer worthy of his hire, whether top or bottom of the staff, than by overloading the library's curriculum and expending money accordingly, to make it impossible to acquire the best officers for its service.

There is another matter which requires serious attention—superannuation. Although superannuation schemes are now becoming more general not every librarian is able to take advantage of a scheme, for the simple reason that there are still many places where no arrangement for after-retirement benefit exists. It is a great relief if one can feel that when work is no longer possible or permissible that something in the way of income can be looked for. As we have already seen the salaries of many librarians are absolutely insufficient to enable the recipients to save enough to live on in retirement. A scheme is essential which makes superannuation provision compulsory for all members of library staffs over twenty-one years of age. Such a scheme should be contributed to by the local authority and the employee, and the benefits should be transferable should the employee take up a fresh position with any other local authority. Retirement should be compulsory at the age of sixty years, but special arrangements ought to be made for those cases where a scheme does not begin to operate until late in the life of an individual. It is certainly not right that a man who has given long years of service to his authority should have to exist on a meagre pittance, while the one who succeeds him inherits a larger salary at the beginning and can look forward to full benefit from a superannuation scheme operative throughout all his term of office.

I think it is time too that chief librarians were not

compelled to live on the library premises as many do now. Where this arrangement exists, it means simply that the librarian is really never off duty but is liable to be called upon at all hours of the day and night. I speak from experience when I say that many committee members and others imagine that the librarian in such cases is a sort of glorified caretaker and must always hold himself at their disposal. It is not good for anybody holding a position of responsibility always to have his official worries within view, and the tendency of every conscientious librarian is to keep about the place, especially in bad weather, while there is always the feeling that there is not that liberty and freedom in the local authority's building which one values so in one's own home. I often envied members of my staff who worked to a time sheet and could look forward to a few hours at any rate of separation from the daily grind. It is worth a little sacrifice of salary to be able to live in a place where you can have a real bit of grass lawn instead of having to be content with a lawn grown in a flower pot and kept on the window sill.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

FOLLOWING on, as a logical sequence, to what I have written in the last chapter, it is obvious that librarians and their assistants must look to the Library Association for information, guidance, suggestion, and initiative on all matters affecting the library service; but as a natural corollary it should be a first duty of all members of library staffs to join the Association as early in their careers as is possible. I have criticized the Library Association for many things done or undone (mostly undone) since I became a member about forty years ago, when the Association was a very different thing from what it is to-day, but it is very clear that the future development of the library movement will be the more rapid and successful if the Association can fairly claim to represent the whole mass of those engaged in libraries. Membership of the Association should mean something more than paying an annual subscription and reading the *Library Association Record*. The rate of progress would be vastly accelerated if members would take advantage of every possible opportunity of meeting fellow members, of learning something of the ideas and practice common in other libraries, of the other fellow's problems and difficulties and how he tries to solve them, above all

of getting known by and familiar with as many members as possible. That inherent shyness which seems so evident at meetings would soon give way to a vigorous determination to fear nobody. How often one has heard *after* a meeting from some more or less frightened colleague that "this was wrong, and that had been denied, and he knew better than the speaker," etc. If every member having a decided view upon some professional topic would only express it in public in the same way as if he were addressing one of his juniors every meeting would be a live one and so much the better for it. Provided one is intent on the general good no one could resent frank and vigorous statements. If they were based on false doctrine or error they would be treated accordingly and no single person could take objection to this treatment, provided he could feel that here again the general good and not the deliberate crushing of the first-mentioned individual was the object. Many a time when I have been taken to task for making statements from memory the result has been to send me to my books again to make sure whether I was on good ground or not. If my contentions had not been disputed I should probably have rest content without troubling to verify again my assertions. My whole point is really this. The Association is what its members make it. The greater the number of members, and the more vigorous and unanimous their assertion of their views and desires, the more influential will the Association be



in all those quarters where their interests lie. Non-members of the Association have no right to criticize its actions. It is disappointing to find that even now something like two out of every five members of library staffs are not members of the Association which represents their interests. They not only restrict the present activities of the Association through limiting its income, but they also injure themselves by not taking advantage of the privileges of membership. It is very much like a non-unionist accepting all the benefits of hours and wages which the trade union might obtain by collective action without it costing him anything. The Library Association is not, of course, a trade union. I often wish that it were more like one than it really is for some purposes, but we cannot have everything we want, even in an Association like ours. It is, however, a fact that it is collective action which does things, and the more powerful the forces behind such action, so much the more is it likely to bring the desired results. The fact that the Library Association is bringing forward proposals for reorganization so comparatively soon after the last big change is surely evidence of the elasticity of its constitution and the desire of those in control to make the Association truly representative of the movement. These proposals are summarized in the *Library Association Record* for June 1935, and although they cannot become operative until approved by members at the annual business meeting, they deserve to be

accepted. They are on the right lines and are calculated to bring about increased membership, greater cohesion among members of all ranks to make their needs and grievances, both as individuals and Association members, familiar to the Council. This lack of contact has, in my view, been one of the failings of the Association in the past. I want what I say here to be accepted as constructive criticism and not fault-finding. I am all for the Association—and a larger, more powerful, and more cohesive body. I have felt for a long time past that there is too much of a tendency to emphasize the *public* library side of things. Of course, the Association may reply that non-municipal library staffs form only a very small percentage of its members. It is somewhat in the nature of a vicious circle, for many non-members of the Association on university, college, Government, and other similar library staffs argue that the reason for their not being members of the Library Association is mainly because the latter is always thinking municipally.

But the University and Research Section of the Association is at any rate, actively working and thinking on non-municipal lines, and the remedy for any grievance in the first place seems to be a very large accession to this branch of new members. I agree that there is a very real difference in the character of the duties and in the organization of non-municipal libraries and in those of the public library as usually

understood, but the Section is largely an autonomous body which can and does achieve much for its members without interference from the main executive of the Library Association. Perhaps what I, and other individuals feel more than anything else, is the lack of opportunity to become familiar in detail with matters of policy, such as, for instance, the proposals for reorganization and amalgamation. One is given some sort of an outline of what is in view and a promise of a full and final statement in due course. But one feels a desire to know not only the scheme in full but the particular reasons prompting the proposed amendments to the constitution.


Will there be, in any case, time enough for busy people to seriously consider the details and to form an independent opinion before being called upon to vote on them in some way, or shall we have various resolutions thrust at us in the agenda for the annual business meeting, when there is usually no time for discussion, or we are told it is out of order to propose anything, the Council having come to a decision on the matter. I cannot avoid expressing the opinion that the way matters are rushed through the annual business meeting and the primitive methods adopted for recording votes are not creditable to a learned society. At the same time it has been just as surprising to realize the large proportion of those present who will agree to anything as long as there is a chance of getting the meeting over quickly. I think something more is

expected from members and the Association. It is satisfactory to know that the new proposals allow for twelve Branches, one or other of which will be convenient for every member of the Association. When this becomes operative the Branch Secretaries should have a busy time "picketing" among the non-members in order to "compel them to come in." These more numerous Branches, with their Sub-Branches, if used by library staffs to their full capacity, seem to me likely to bring about that fuller contact and wider knowledge so eminently desirable and, as I have said, so seriously wanting up to now. Another point which has impressed itself upon me is the failure of the Council to recognize ability outside its own members. I am not reflecting, I hope, upon the qualifications and ability of those members, far from it. But I think it should be recognized that when inquiries, missions, visits, and so forth have to be made, the composition of the bodies responsible should be made up of the *most* qualified persons for the purpose, whether members of the Council or not. It certainly ought not to be assumed that the qualifications of the members of the Council *on all subjects* are superior to other members of the Association outside the Council. While it has recently seemed likely that the junior members of the profession would shortly be in a position to control the whole library movement, the suggested dissolution of the Association of Assistant Librarians seems likely to prevent that undesirable

possibility. It is, I think, to the younger members that one must look for "gingering-up" developments, but the older and wiser heads are necessary at the helm. In other words the youth of the profession are the steam in the boiler, but the more experienced members should have the control of the valves.

The Library Association is fortunate, at the moment, in its President—Mr. E. A. Savage—one of the ablest and most progressive librarians in Britain to-day, and as Hon. Secretary, Mr. L. R. McColvin, whose rise in the profession has been almost amazing, but who possesses, in my opinion, those qualities of knowing what is wanted, a pronounced conviction as to the value of our libraries, of the faults in some, of their possibilities as a whole, which, together with his unlimited energy and enthusiasm, must make his influence on the Association a powerful one for good. As long as the other man's view is listened to, and autocracy derided, the Association should be thankful indeed to those who serve it so well. There are many other things which the Association can, and probably will do as money and time allow, and some of these are suggested in Mr. J. Renie's paper on a five-year plan in the *Library Association Record* for June 1935. Space will not allow of my going into details, but as the Association has recognized the value of increased publicity by broadcasting, etc., I hope they will go farther and farther. I have often wondered why the Association has not entered a bit of pageantry in the Lord

Mayor's Procession. It is easy to think of tableaux of various kinds which would make an immense appeal to onlookers. So far I can recall demonstrations which suggested the desirability of certain foods for human bodies, foods for animals, and even fodder for cannon, and it seems nearly time for a reminder that mind and spirit are equally hungry at times although not always do they find direction to their stores of supplies as easily as the others. It is false doctrine to say that "we dare not advertise for our supply is not even equal to the limited demand we now get." An overwhelming demand is the best thing possible to compel reluctant authorities to make the supply equal to the demand. As long as the demand is not pressed, just so long will those responsible hide their heads and try to think it does not exist. The Association by persistent and capable advocacy of its functions will prepare those in authority to recognize the need for a new consolidated Libraries Act which will remove past hindrances and make easier the path of progress and rapid development.



## CHAPTER VIII

### LIBRARY BUILDINGS OF THE FUTURE

ONE of the noticeable features of the library movement in recent years has been the effort to provide library buildings adequate to meet all requirements, more comfortable and attractive, better lighted and ventilated, with new departments, and in every way an improvement on those already in existence. Naturally the internal arrangements of the newest public libraries vary in accordance with the size of the place and the numbers of people to be catered for, but a comparison of the libraries recently erected—Manchester, the very big city (population, 760,000), Birkenhead, the large-medium size town (population, 150,000), and the Leytonstone Branch of the Leyton Public Libraries, to serve a population of 40,000—will show that, whatever the size of building required, in every case the improvements mentioned above have been constantly in the minds of those responsible. Manchester may be considered as the model for any new very large library—not necessarily in its architectural features, but in what it has provided internally. Detailed accounts of the library and plans and illustrations will be found in the *Library Association Record* for August 1934, and in the Proceedings of the Eleventh Conference of the Association of Special Libraries and Information

Bureaux, 1934. The important feature is the four-tier steel book stack which supports the great hall (the principal reading-room). There are about 3,600 stack columns supporting 40,000 shelves, each adjustable and interchangeable throughout the whole stack. The stack floors are only  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches thick, but all electric conduits and outlet boxes are concealed inside them. There is no question that this type of construction, by which the book stack supports are made the main supports of the whole structure, is the most desirable where economy of space giving maximum accommodation is required. As already noted the use of the special stack floors, less than three inches thick, enables a reduction of the height of each floor of about one foot to be made, compared with the ordinary concrete floors which still seem to be favoured in some quarters. This economy means a gain of one whole floor when the stacks run to eight tiers, and a considerable reduction of structural costs when the number of tiers is fewer than eight. The circular building of six floors at Manchester contains, in the basement, machinery and electrical equipment, Lecture Theatre, Cloakrooms, Binding and Printing Departments, Packing Room and Strong Room; on the ground floor the Lending Libraries; on the first floor the Reference Libraries (including the Commercial Library and the Technical Library), Periodical Room and Exhibition Hall; on the second floor, Research Rooms, Special Collections, Lecture Rooms,



and Committee Rooms; the third floor is allocated to the Administration Department and Staff Rooms, while the fourth contains the Corporation Records and reserve book storage. The provision of twelve carrels for research workers is an admirable innovation, as they are not usually to be found in other than university libraries. The original library, opened in 1852, had to cater for a population of about 310,000; the new building is well adapted to serve the present population, estimated to be 760,000.

The new Birkenhead Central Library, erected at a cost of £60,000 (including the site) is particularly interesting in that the designers have obviously striven to provide something akin to the "all glass" front, as will be evident on reference to the description of the library in the *Library Association Record* for September 1934, on page 309 of which will be found an excellent picture of the exterior. This is made even more appreciable by the grass-laid terraces and flagged paths in front of it. An admirably sited structure, set back 70 feet from the pavement. The lower ground floor contains the Children's Library (2,800 sq. ft.); Filing, Binding, and Work Rooms; heating plant. The Staff Rooms occupy the mezzanine floor above. On the ground floor are the Lending Library (8,578 sq. ft.), believed to be the largest in floor area in the country, the Magazine Reading-room (1,800 sq. ft.), and a Lecture Hall (1,200 sq. ft.). The mezzanine floor above is taken up by the Staff Work Room, while the first floor contains

the Reference Library Reading-room (1,800 sq. ft.), and Stack Room (2,240 sq. ft.), with the Librarian's and Committee Rooms, Cloakrooms, etc. A feature of special interest is the heating of the main rooms by invisible panels, thus avoiding the use of radiators and pipework.

The third type of library I have chosen to write about is the Leytonstone Branch of the Leyton Public Libraries, not only because it provides a new idea of a public library above a parade of shops, but also because such an arrangement resulted in a building at an almost negligible capital cost to the library rate and no real cost to the inhabitants. In addition the library's internal planning and equipment is so much in advance of what has been customary in a branch library that it will without doubt influence every local authority having library responsibilities in future. The entrance to the library is an outstanding feature of the plan, so that it is obviously a library with shops on the ground level and not a parade of shops with a library above. Thus was one objection to the plan removed. A second problem, the undesirability of a library on a first floor needing the climbing of a staircase before access to any of the public rooms could be gained, was met by the argument that many libraries have a flight of steps to be mounted before the entrance is reached, without apparent dislike by the public, and therefore there could be no serious difference between a flight of steps outside and a staircase inside.

Features which are to be highly commended in this building are the pivoted newspaper slopes, at which readers may sit, with electric light to be used at the will of the reader; the circular tables each seating four readers, and individual armchairs with special right arms enabling readers to use the smaller periodicals away from contact with any other person. The building contains, in addition to the Reading-room, Lending Library, and Juvenile Department, a Lecture Hall and an Adult Study, for the consultation of quick reference works, and accommodation for twelve readers in pairs. The Lending Library in particular shows real consideration for the reader and the staff. No book-case, except the wall-cases, is higher than five feet, quiet corners are fitted with seats for borrowers to make browsing comfortable, all counter service is able to be performed seated, and there are special facilities for display, while colour schemes, easy chairs, art pottery, and electric log fires are highly commendable features in an admirably equipped institution. Many a large town library will have cause to envy the inhabitants of Leytonstone, and whether people intent in shopping discover the library, or visitors to the library have their attention drawn to the shops, the result is bound to be mutually advantageous. It is not the only library in the kingdom built above shops, but by a happy combination of circumstances and the wholehearted co-operation of the architect with the librarian Leytonstone has become the possessor of a bigger, better

and brighter library than it would have had if the old traditions had been followed.

In so far as university libraries are concerned, the last few years have seen great developments. Cambridge has its new University Library, on a seven-and-a-half-acre site, with its 157-foot high book tower and its twelve floors, steel bookcases amounting to about 40 miles and yet estimated to be full in about 50 years, its reading-tables among the stacks, colour schemes in reading-rooms, and its magnificent main reading-room 193 feet long and 40 feet wide seating 152 readers. What an advance is here! And there is a new University Library being erected at Leeds, others to be built at Liverpool, Manchester, and Swansea, and a new Bodleian to come in the near future. I wonder what lessons have been learned by those to be responsible for these great institutions. Have we yet reached a stage when it will be possible to say that everything in them and about them has been decided upon because it is the known best for its purpose (that of reading and book accommodation, efficient service, minimum of waste, whether of space or money) or will there still remain a love of Greece and Rome, of pillars and concrete, a compromise between the old and the new?

We are still "saturated" with library buildings looking like barracks or poor law institutions, which have done service for many, many years, and which cry aloud for demolition or reconstruction, but there

will be no lack of precedents to follow when that time comes. Any visitor to Sheffield or other places which I have mentioned above, coming from one of those towns where an antique library building exists, must go back with feelings of envy and a burning desire to see what can be done to produce a library on one of the new patterns. The future is going to be a time of greater leisure for the masses and this leisure may be a danger to the individual or a blessing to humanity at large. A great responsibility will rest on the shoulders of public library authorities in preparing themselves to do their part in securing the right utilization of this leisure by those who receive it.

Unknown to me when I arranged for the publication of this work, some articles entitled "A Library of the Future" had appeared in the *Library Journal* for December 1 and 15, 1933. They were written by Mr. Angus Snead Macdonald, President of the Snead Company, the well-known specialists in library science (in this country Luxfer Limited). When the article was brought to my notice I was so impressed by it and the fact that unconsciously I had been working out ideas on much the same lines, that I felt compelled to ask for permission to make use of the articles, or as much of them as fitted my own programme. This permission was readily given, and the Snead Company, also at my request, willingly provided me with the material for the illustrations here reproduced as well as the plans for a new library,

based on the principles contained in the articles mentioned above, the architect being Mr. Alfred Norton Githens. I am exceedingly grateful to Mr. Macdonald and the the Snead and Luxfer Companies for their kindness in placing these facilities at my disposal. These plans are not fanciful or Utopian. They are actually those proposed for a new public library, and though, at the moment, they appear to be a long way ahead of what is likely to be seen in this country, they are not really so revolutionary to-day as they might have seemed to be ten years ago. It has to be recognized that most of our existing libraries have been built according to a tradition established long ago, when the appearance of a building was almost the only thing considered, when libraries were intended only for scholars, and when books were protected from the public as things to be preserved rather than used. I want to make it clear that the remarks following are not to be taken as representing the views of Mr. Macdonald, but I have been glad to make use of the principles he has laid down in his paper, because they make my own views seem less Utopian, while the fact that Mr. Githens has already planned a library of the kind one has only previously dreamed of convinces me that nothing I have in mind is impracticable. The first thing one has to realize is that co-operation of the architect with the librarian becomes more than ever essential if the library is to attract all classes and all standards of readers. The university

student, the artisan, the professional man, the housewife, and the child must be given equal consideration. We have to make up our minds that in the large industrial town, with its quarter of a million or upwards of inhabitants, there will be a commercial area and a dormitory town, and the public general library will therefore be of most service where it is more easily accessible to the residential population. The new library then will be built within the local park, or in a park of its own, constructed on an area previously filled up with slum dwellings. In its park the library will have room for endless expansion, on ground for the moment to be covered with grass lawns and trees and shrubs. The entrance will be on the ground level, through a porch covered with climbing rose bushes, whose brightly flowered branches will in themselves attract to the vicinity of the building. On each side of the porch entrance will be a paved sloping walk going all round the building, and made into a covered arcade. On one side of the walk all newspapers will be displayed, an adjustable armchair before each one. The other side will entirely be occupied for propaganda for the library and all other cultural, social, and scientific movements in the locality. This arcade will have at intervals, suspended from its glazed covering, artistic baskets of flowering plants and ferns, interspersed with brilliant electric lights. It will make a retreat for the person caught by a sudden storm outside, and possibly may

be his first introduction to the library and its possessions.

Provision is made outside the building for the parking of motor-cars—an arrangement now sadly lacking—which will encourage many people a little distant from the library to make greater use of it. An easy slope leads up to the main entrance hall, on either side of which are cloakrooms, access to them being down a wide staircase. Above one of these is a comfortably furnished room, with tables on which are displayed a few of the newest books and magazines, surrounding vases of fresh flowers. On the opposite side is a tea-room, where jaded readers may have that little material food for the body which helps to give permanency to the mental food previously imbibed. A long hall leads straight through the length of the building. In the centre near the entrance a large circular desk is both a supervision post and a delivery station, where all books are checked in and out. Telephonic communication with all departments is available, pneumatic tubes carry application forms and similar documents to the stack rooms, and mechanical conveyors are constantly running taking and returning books to their proper departments. Restful chairs are placed at each side of the delivery desk for inquirers waiting to consult the Readers' Adviser or the catalogue cabinets immediately beyond the desk. At the far end of the hall are a number of small alcoves formed by short bays of shelving,



between which are a few lounge chairs. On the shelves will be found copies of the newest books, and a member of the staff is at hand to answer any questions. A large general reading-room is entered from the middle of the great hall, in which the more popular weekly and monthly periodicals will be found. On the whole length of the partition backing on to the hall steel periodical racks exhibit plainly, on sloping shelves, the current numbers of the various journals. In this room, more especially intended for the casual reader, you will not see a row of chairs at a row of tables, but a number of circular tables with easy chairs dotted all over the room, enabling a reader to choose his seat where he likes and also his immediate neighbour. The height of the ceiling from the floor is only eight feet, and the windows, which continue right to the top of the building, are not kept open, but perfect mechanical ventilation, air washing and cooling, and heat control, keep the temperature always about 60°-65°, protect the books from dust and the bindings from decay either from over-dryness or dampness. The room is beautifully lighted by means of bulk-head prismatic lights sunk into the ceiling. Above this room is a general reference library, and stretching right across the end part of the great hall is a reading-room for the more scientific and studious magazines. Comfortable seats and unfixed tables are in this room also, while in the reference room readers occupy the window half of the whole

length, the opposite side being taken up by rows of steel bookcases, every alternative row being two stacks short in order to accommodate a small table and a chair or two for readers who wish to make a hurried consultation only. The administrative offices are situated at the back part of the gallery, which is reached by two wide tread staircases, on each side of the large electric fire at the far end of the great hall. The children's library is on the opposite side of the great hall to the periodical room and all the comforts and conveniences provided for the adult reader are here repeated on a smaller scale. At the far end of the great hall rooms are provided for cleaners, packing, janitor, staff, etc., with an exit to the street at the rear. The first floor proper is allocated entirely to book storage and special accommodation for readers. The whole stock is classified according to subject, each main subject having a compartment of its own, made up by interchangeable steel unit partitions. These walls are made of unit panels of uniform size, insulated against heat and sound transmission, interlocking with window sections and with deck floors in such a way that they may be taken down and reassembled in a new location. This method produces a really expansible building which may be enlarged by adding new layers of "interchangeable" space whenever required. As this space is divided into quite small units readers naturally require specific guidance, and in the main

entrance hall and in other lobbies electric guide boards giving the location and direction for any department are placed in conspicuous positions.

The next two tiers are allocated to similar purposes as the first floor. It should be mentioned that a central portion of each compartment contains one or more small circular tables with lounge chairs, and other chairs are dotted about, while every other row of shelving is minus two three-foot stacks, in place of which is substituted a circular table and chairs reserved for readers doing special work. At one end of each tier a few carrels or research stalls are made by an ingenious arrangement of a low steel bookcase across each gangway. The lines of division between each department are formed by the movable panels and doors which interlock with the stack columns and floors, and can quickly be transferred to a different location without noise or confusion. All these units are made to fit in with the standard three-foot-long bookstack. Once a year the whole library storage is examined and any cutting down, expanding, or shifting required to meet the variations in the growth of subjects is easily accomplished. Fig. 1 illustrates the application of the principle in the Library of Congress. The right-hand side of the gangway is occupied by offices and work rooms, while the left hand side is storage space. At any moment when required these partitions can be removed and the whole area used for library accommodation. Fig. 2 shows filing,

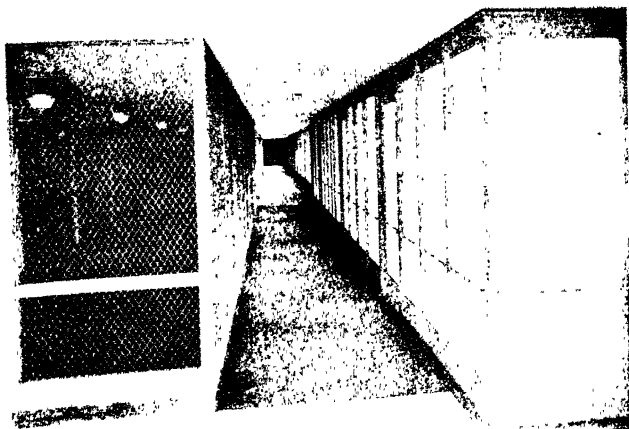


FIG. 1. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SHOWING OFFICES ON THE RIGHT, STORAGE ON THE LEFT, EVENTUALLY TO GIVE PLACE TO LIBRARY ACCOMMODATION

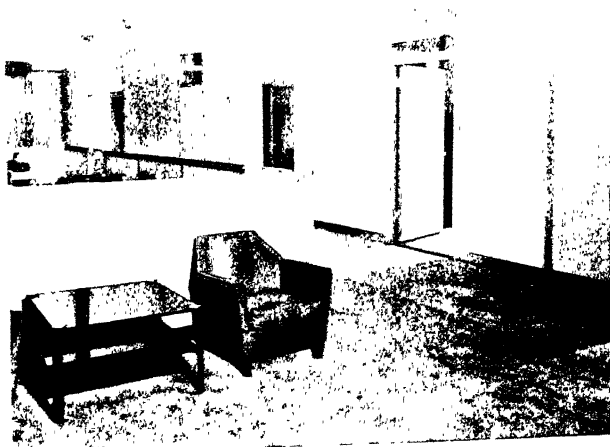


FIG. 3. STORAGE FLOOR TAKEN OVER FOR GENERAL UTILITY PURPOSES UNTIL REQUIRED FOR BOOK ACCOMMODATION

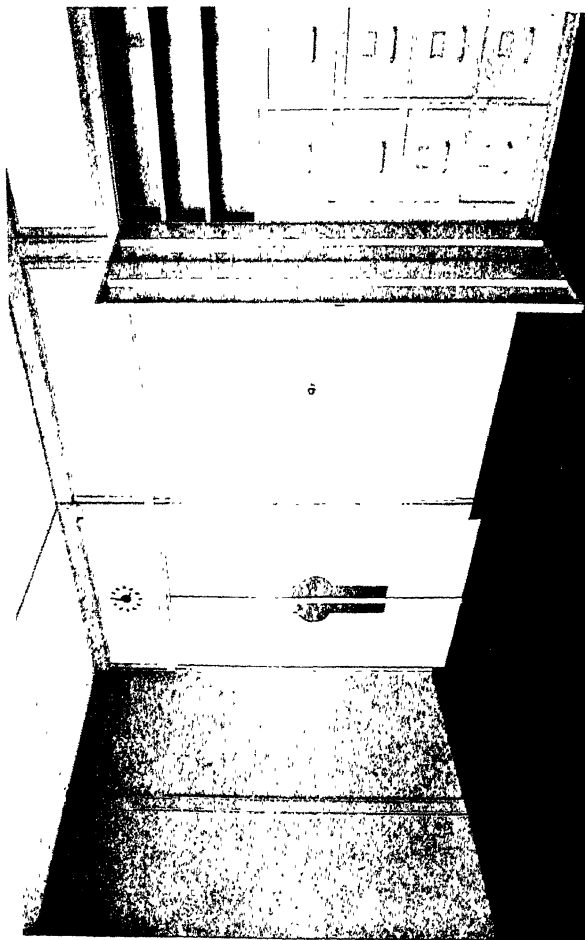


FIG. 2.—SHOWING FILING FURNITURE BUILT INTO THE HOLLOW PARTITION, ILLUMINATION  
IN TOP PANEL, AND REMOVABLE AT ANY TIME

furniture now in use built into the hollow partition eventually to give place to stack accommodation. A particularly interesting feature of the partitions here is that illumination is provided inside the top of the panel as shown, and when the partition is removed elsewhere the illumination goes with it, all conduits being fitted within the panels. Plugging in to any floor or wall switch is all that is necessary to obtain light.

The new annexe to the Library of Congress in course of construction will be able to accommodate somewhere about ten million volumes eventually, within the original exterior walls. Although built for storage only the building can be used for any purposes until the erection of shelving becomes necessary. In this annexe an even newer principle in flooring has been introduced. The slender columns supporting the whole structure are spaced at uniform distances, but the floors will be of solid steel in sections, faced with cork, and fitting into the columns. At any time a two-tier stack room can be made into a sixteen-foot-high room for general purposes by simply taking out the floor sections. In the same way a single floor room can be turned into a two-tier stack room by putting in the floor sections. This annexe, by the way, is situated some distance from the main library building, but rapid service will be maintained by means of (as at present planned) four mechanical conveyors and pneumatic tubes, travelling underground. Fig. 3

presents a view of a storage floor taken over for general utility purposes until the area is required for book accommodation.

Our third floor, two tiers (sixteen feet) high, is reached by means of the lift, the lobby of which leads out to a large reception hall, with galleries round all the four sides. This hall will be found useful also as a dance hall or for other social functions, with furnishings of a suitable character for such purposes.

Opening off from this hall are several lecture rooms of different sizes, to be used for library lectures, wireless discussion groups, etc., and made available when not required for library purposes for society meetings, lecture courses, and the needs of any cultural organization. The partition walls on this floor are again made of interchangeable units, so that the various small rooms, if it is desired, may be made into one or two very large rooms. The main idea has been to attract to the library those organizations of a literary and social character, unable really to afford independent accommodation, which would bring mutual advantages to themselves and the library. When necessity demands an extension of the library's storage capacity, this floor can easily be turned into a general utility space. Last of all the roof itself is made use of. This is an open-air reading-room, with ornamental boxes containing plants and flowers, shrubs in tubs of gay colourings, awnings to shield from the sun's rays, comfortable wicker furniture, etc., with sliding

roof of steel and glass, and walls to correspond, so that even in winter the fullest benefit can be obtained from sun and air. It is impossible, of course, in the limited space at my disposal to give all the details of measurements, etc., which such a building as I have suggested above would require. The actual floor space would naturally have to vary with the size of the town, but the principles I have enumerated can be applied anywhere. It will be noticed that I have not suggested a separate lending department as such, because the arbitrary division between lending and reference books will quickly become a thing of the past, and 80 per cent of the books will be available for borrowing, while any book in the library may be read in comfort within the building. The exits are so arranged that every reader must eventually pass out by the main hall, where all books in a reader's possession must be shown and duly registered if required for home reading. No fiction class as such will be accommodated here, but numerous small branches and delivery stations will be located in convenient parts of the town. The cost of such a building is not going to be prohibitive. Its elastic construction, on standardized lines, the absence of solid interior walls, the use of eight-foot multiples from floor to floor, which permit the installation of mezzanine stories between the main structural floors, all make an immense difference in building costs. The use of windows of maximum dimensions, and



illumination of daylight quality from low ceilings, mean a vast economy from the monumental type of reading-room, with high ceilings and dull walls, wherein much lighting current is consumed but of which the reader gets all too little. The plans of Mr. Githens, some portions of which I am privileged to introduce, are

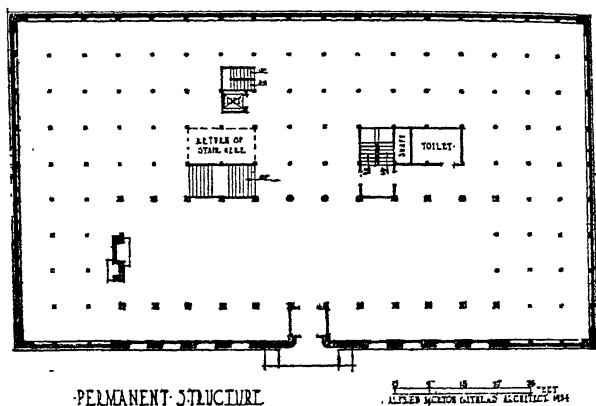


FIG. 4

on an even more massive scale than anything I have proposed, but an examination of them will show that not only are the suggestions I have made not fanciful, but that they are already in practice on bigger lines than we can expect to see realized in this country yet. Again America has introduced a new epoch into library architecture, and once more we shall be compelled to follow the lead given. Fig. 4 shows how the building and stacks depend on the same supports;

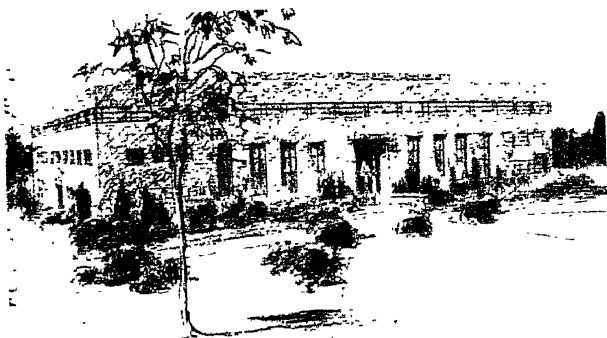


Fig. 5

FIG 5. EXTERIOR VIEW, SHOWING IDEAL LOCATION AND APPROACH



FIG 7. POPULAR LIBRARY AND ISSUE DESK

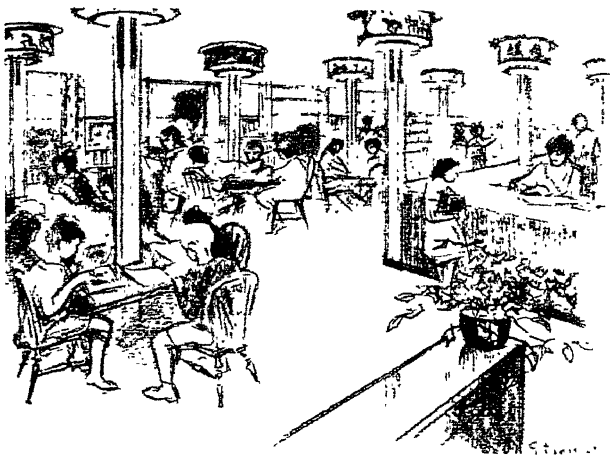


FIG. 8. ELEMENTARY (OR CHILDREN'S) LIBRARY

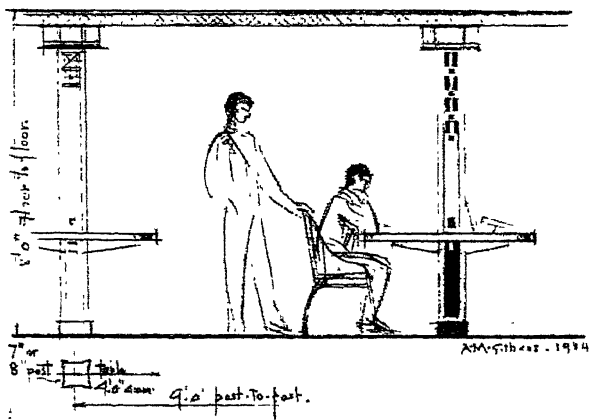


FIG. 9. SHOWING LIGHTING FROM TOP OF COLUMN

slender stack columns spaced nine feet apart in both directions, so making it a simple matter to fit in the standard size bookcase three feet wide.

The internal measurements of each floor in this particular library are roughly 144 feet by 80 feet (11,520 square feet). The exterior view (Fig. 5) shows

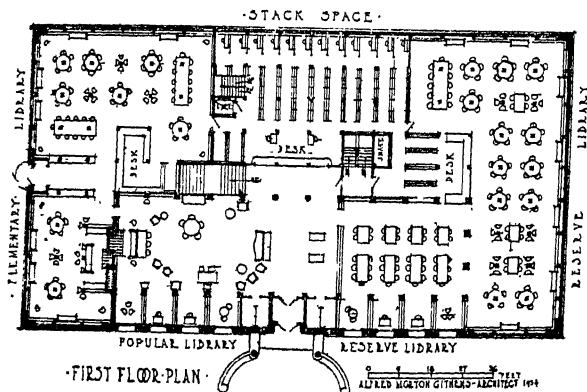


FIG. 6

an ideal location and approach which must arouse the envy of library authorities. It will be a good thing if it does, for I know of hardly anything else which will bring about emulation so quickly. The first-floor plan (Fig. 6) (or the ground floor as we should call it) is an admirable combination of book stacks, circular and oblong tables for groups, individual seats, carrels, etc., for the more popular departments of the library. Fig. 7 is a view of the popular library and issue desk,

while Fig. 8 shows the elementary (or children's) library. It will be noticed in Fig. 5 that circular tables are placed round many of the slender columns, and Fig. 9 shows how the lighting for these tables is obtained from the top of the column, conduits and wiring being invisible. The mezzanine floor (Fig. 10)

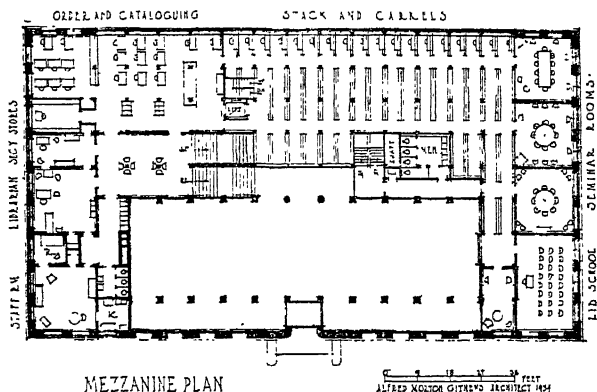


FIG. 10

contains the administration and work rooms, more stacks and carrels, and small reading-rooms at one end, all determined by the positions of the columns. The second floor (Fig. 11), devoted to reference work mainly, again shows how the nine-foot spacing of the supports enables the differing accommodation to be satisfied. On one side the double stacks form alcoves approximately nine feet apart, while the carrels on the opposite side occupy just half that space, in exact

alignment with the double stacks near by. The centre tables in the reference reading-room are nine feet long and four feet wide, seating three readers on each side, giving an area of three feet by two feet to each place. An additional seat is also possible at one end. The roof above (Fig. 12) is allocated as an outdoor

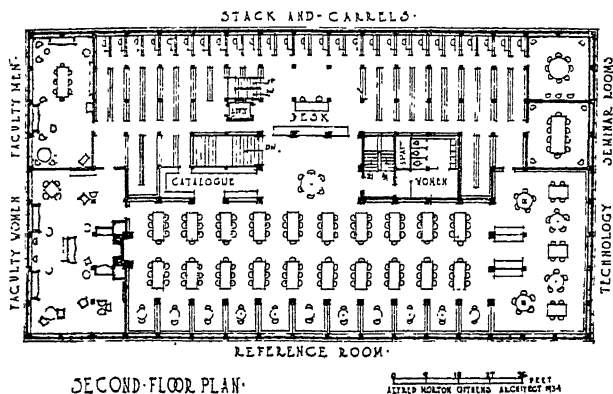
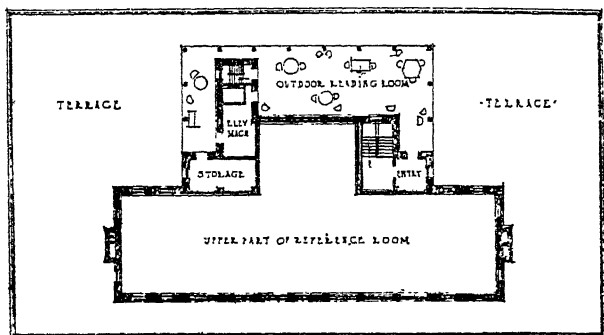


FIG. 11

reading-room, flanked on each side by a planted terrace, surely a practical possibility in new buildings here. If large London stores are able, as they are, to have gardens and other attractions on the roofs of their buildings there seems no reason why our libraries should neglect to copy them. It is realized, of course, that London is not yet a smokeless city like New York, and some of our industrial towns are a good deal worse than London, but one would

naturally consider all these things when planning. There are, at any rate, very few places which need have any fears in this connection.

I would like to draw attention also to the new South Hall Library of Columbia University, recently taken into use. Here also the stack supports form the



CLERESTORY AND ROOF

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 FEET  
ALLEN JACKSON CIVIL ENGINEER 1934

FIG. 12

piers of the main structure. This Columbia Library is built around a laboratory bookstack, the largest bookstack ever constructed as a single unit; a large windowless central stack without interior or exterior light courts. At present it consists of fifteen tiers, but the present stack roof will eventually be the deck floor for the sixteenth tier, as the stack structure is designed for a four-tier top extension. The interchangeable units make up the entire stack structure

and provision can be made anywhere in the stack for readers or the work of the library staff or for book storage. So accurate are the dimensions of all parts that it was possible to sight a lighted match ninety feet away on the far side of the stack room through the lines of five-sixteenth-inch bolt holes in successive rows of stack columns. Heating and ventilating are entirely mechanical. Fresh air is taken in at the roof and drawn down into the basement through a large metal duct. Here it is filtered, humidified, and brought to the desired temperature by heating during cold weather and refrigerating during warm weather. The air in each stack tier is changed four times an hour and handled independently from the other tiers. The atmospheric conditions are practically ideal for workers in the stack, while the expense of cleaning floors, stacks, and books is greatly reduced by such a system, which also promotes the long life of book materials by keeping the proper amount of moisture in them. This saving in maintenance expenses, with the other advantages obtained, makes a full air-conditioning equipment a necessary economy and not a costly luxury. The four acres of deck floors in the new Columbia Library will contain no fewer than seventy-three miles of shelving.

It is impossible for me, in the limited space at my disposal, to do more than outline the various new departures in library planning actually in being or visualized which I have tried to describe. The attractions of these buildings are so patent, the advance in



comfort so apparent, that I am convinced that the ratepayers of the community would be less unwilling to provide money for an institution worthy of its place in the public life than they have been in the past to provide those many dreary, musty buildings which have done duty as public libraries for so long a time.

I believe also that the public as a whole have a greater respect for those things which they realize are intended for their maximum comfort and convenience than they have for the shoddy, uncomfortable, and sometimes repellent furniture and equipment which they frequently have to put up with. One is always more disposed to protect and cherish the things which please one than things which have no attractions for the eye or the touch, though they may possess the qualification of being everlasting. However reluctant we may be to bring about a revolution in library design, it is no solution to the problem to be satisfied with asking the question "Why should we accept these ideas?" The question should be rather, "What is there to prevent us fashioning our new library according to the newest principles?" In other words "How are we to plan our library so that it can be the most attractive, the most comfortable, the most efficient, and the most indispensable public institution for all classes of the community, whatever their ages, opinions, and needs?"

I do beg all librarians, architects, and others who will be responsible in any way for the planning of

library buildings in future to give earnest consideration to the views expressed in this chapter, and that they will find it possible to introduce some, at any rate, of the new things. The ideal may be a long way off, but the end of a road becomes nearer at every step forward.



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